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ROCK AND SAND

BY

JOHN RATHBONE OLIVER

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SET UP BY BROWN BROTHERS LINOTYPERS
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TO MY SISTER
ELIZABETH OLIVER STEVENS
AND TO MY FRIEND
RUDOLPH CLARK CULVER
BECAUSE THEY REMEMBER THE OLD DAYS
AND LOVE THE OLD PLACES.

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Therefor, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock. And the rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock. And everyone that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand.

St. Mathew vii. 24-26

Que les beaux jours sont courts.

Old French Canadian Song

INTRODUCTION

Salut!

The insignificant happenings that first brought together the two very different groups of people about whom this book is written, groups different in race, in general outlook, and in faith, and that intertwined their lives so closely for good and for evil, began over forty years ago, in very different and widely separated places: in a small American city in one of the Eastern states and in a deserted farmhouse of French Canada, beneath the shadow of the Laurentian hills. To the French Canadians, Americans were heretics and outcasts of some mysterious but powerful kind; while to the Americans, the French Canadians were "Canucks," members of an inferior race, who spoke a debased alien language, who were uncouth, uneducated, and who worshiped the Pope and the Virgin Mary.

And yet, God, or the Fates, or Chance, or whatever strange power it may be that governs this complex world of ours, made at first one small knot that bound together a single chance strand from the whole skein of those American lives and another loose thread from other lives in Canada. Gradually, strand was wound into strand so closely that at last a rope was fashioned, by which some of these same lives were drawn down to Hell and others lifted up to Heaven. Today it would be a hopeless task to attempt to unravel that rope. All the historian can do is to go back to the beginnings, to the time when there was no rope at all, but only two strands, two loose ends from two groups of lives, and to describe the changes and chances by which they were first knotted together.

The Christian name "Amyas," pronounced "Her-my-as," is not common in French Canada. How this name, borne by great gentlemen like Sir Amyas Leigh, ever found its way to the shores of the St. Lawrence, I cannot tell. At Pointe au Pic we have Scotch names enough—the MacNicholls, the Warrens, the Blackburns. They are all descended from officers and men of a Scotch Regiment that was disbanded several hundred years ago in this part of the Province of Quebec; from men who were unwilling to return to Scotland, who preferred to take up land in the New Country, and who married there. Was there an "Amyas" among them, who refused to follow the example of his comrades and name his son after one of the Saints of the Catholic Calendar?

In any case, I knew an "Amyas"—or a "Hermyas" —once. The name is real enough. And any reader of this book who has known this part of French Canada during the past thirty-odd years will realize that I have not drawn much on my imagination in collecting my material. Almost everything that I have tried to describe did actually happen—once. Doubtless in these present days, when everyone is so well-to-do and there is so little *misère* even in winter, it might not happen again. And yet the people of New France change very little; for they have behind them and all around them a changeless Faith.

J. R. O.

Pointe au Pic
July-August
1930

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PROLOGUE

Bonne Chance!

"My dear, we simply must find another place to go to this summer."

Colonel Randolph put down his coffee cup with a gentle sigh. He knew what was coming. He had been through it so often. But he was a patient man in his own house. He had learned to be.

"Why, Immy?" he asked.

His wife shivered her shoulders in the high leg-of-mutton sleeves that had just become "so fashionable." Of all things, she hated to be called "Immy." Her name was Imogene—bad enough as it was, so why make it worse? Immy sounded so "common," and commonness was the One Thing from which Mrs. J. Barton Randolph fled as from a pestilence.

"You know why as well as I do. What was the use of our spending all that money on the Adirondack camp three years ago? The children and I got nothing out of it. We were too far away from the other people on the lake—no one ever came to see us—and the girls made no useful friends."

"Anne liked it," murmured her husband into his coffee.

"I do wish you wouldn't mutter into your coffee! Now it's all over your mustache!"

"I'm sorry, my dear. But if you'd only let me keep that old cup of mine with the mustache protector on it, I wouldn't be so——"

"That hideous cup! No gentleman ever uses such a thing. I gave it to the swill-man—I mean the man who collects the kitchen refuse." (Why would those slips of the tongue persist!) "Of course Anne liked that awful camp," she went on, irritably. "She's so mad about exercise, and the woods, and fishing or shooting things. What good will all that foolishness do her? The only sensible thing she's ever done is to take up this new golf game that nice people are so crazy about. No, the Adirondacks were a dead loss to the family. And as for last summer—well, you remember that yourself, I suppose."

"North East Harbor wasn't so bad," the husband protested. "I got a lot out of my two weeks' holiday. Sailing and fishing and——"

"And what kind of people did you go sailing with, I'd like to know! A lot of old retired sea captains or Maine fishermen! But who was there for Robin to play with? Or for the younger girls? Of course it was bad luck, our taking rooms at the head of the cove, right in the middle of all those Philadelphians, who had been coming there for ages and who knew each others' great-great-grandfathers. I didn't get to know a single one of them—at least, not well enough to do me or the girls any real good."

Colonel Randolph got up from the breakfast table. He had not finished his coffee; he had lost all interest in it. Carefully he smoothed out the morning paper that he had been glancing through, and placed it at his wife's elbow. Often he envied her. She could dawdle over her morning coffee, she could really read the morning paper, while he had to be at the office at nine o'clock.

But his wife caught him by the coat sleeve as he bent over to salute her upturned cheek. She was a good-looking woman still, for all her forty years and the four children that she had born to him. Not yet run to fat or shapelessness, like so many other men's wives, but well set-up and well dressed, too. There might be some small wrinkles at the corners of her hard blue eyes and around her determined little mouth; but there were no gray strands in her brown hair, and her skin was as clear and as soft as it had been in the days when he had first been presented to her by her father. Old Colonel Higgins, a prosperous manufacturer of furniture, had commanded the city's one militia regiment, and he had been impressed by the soldierly bearing of young James Randolph, a first lieutenant in Company B. Colonel Randolph was thinking now more of the old Colonel, who had given him his only daughter and taken him into his business, than of what the Colonel's daughter, his wife, was saying.

"You're not listening, James." He felt his wife's fingers grip the flesh of his lower arm. What a powerful grip she had! Once she got hold of something——

"Yes, my dear, I am. You were saying——"

"I was saying that we've got to find some summer place that's new. Some place that isn't full of people who've been there for ages—every summer—and who form a kind of charmed circle that you've got to break into if you want the children to have a good time. A place that isn't well known—where we, the Barton Randolphs, can be among the first summer residents. If I could find a place like that, I'd be willing to keep on going there summer after summer; because no matter what people came there after us, we'd have been on the spot before them. We'd be somebody already. I want—I want—" Her voice broke a little, and she leaned her head for an instant against her husband's arm. "I want to find a place where I won't have to be fighting all the time in order to meet nice people and getting snubbed for my pains. I get so tired of fighting, sometimes!"

"Is it worth fighting for, Immy, I wonder?" her husband asked. He scarcely ever saw her in a mood like this.

Her figure straightened. She drew away from her husband's arm, and looking down at her, he saw that she had assumed what he used to call her "frozen fighting-face."

"Worth fighting for?" she echoed. "How little men like you understand! You'd be content to see your children sitting in the gutter if they had happened to be born there. I'm not like that. I'm going to give my children the very best that I can get out of the world for them."

"Perhaps they won't like it when they get it," her husband retorted, as he turned toward the front door. "Anne wouldn't."

"Oh, you and Anne!" Mrs. Randolph rose in wrath from the table, upsetting her coffee cup and drenching the newspaper with its dark streams. She gritted her teeth. "But I'll find the right sort of place, somehow—and in spite of you all."

Her husband's hand was on the knob of the front door, when he happened to glance back into the dining room and saw her—his wife—sitting slumped in her chair, her elbow on the table in the midst of the slopped coffee. She looked discouraged. He felt sorry that he had not been more helpful. He wanted to do something for her—to say something. And so he said the first thing that came into his mind.

"Immy—Imogene," he called gently from the front hall. "I've just thought of something. There was a man in our office yesterday, from whom we buy lumber, who lives in Canada. He was telling me about a place that he goes to in summer, somewhere on the St. Lawrence, below Quebec. The life there is simple. But you get marvelous fishing and——"

"Fishing!" The word reached him from the distant breakfast table in a sort of strangled snort. He shrugged his shoulders and had half opened the door, when his wife's voice checked him.

"What's the name of the place?" she asked.

"I don't know."

"Then, in heaven's name, why talk to me about it?"

"But you see, Immy, this Canadian—the man in the lumber business—wouldn't tell me the name. He said that he and his few friends who go there keep it dark because they don't want all kinds of people coming up there for the summer and spoiling the place. He'd had a couple of drinks or he wouldn't have let out even that much. To hear him talk, you'd think this little Canadian village was a kind of paradise. It's always cool, he says. No hot, sweltering nights. There's the St. Lawrence right in front of you. He was plain crazy about it all. But of course, it would never do for you. No hotels there. You have to rent one of the little houses in the village. And there wouldn't be any of what you call society. Only three or four Canadian families and two American ones go there. So you see, it wouldn't do at all. I don't know what put it into my mind."

Slowly, Mrs. Randolph turned away from the table and looked at her husband over her shoulder.

"Find out the name of that place," she said, abruptly. As her husband made some gesture of dissent, she came and stood in the doorway. "I tell you, find out. You say that you've business connections with this Canadian lumberman; well, put on the screws. Make him tell. Give him more than two drinks if necessary."

"Why, Immy," said her husband, astonished at her unexpected and intense interest; "you can't be thinking of——"

"I'm not thinking at all," she retorted. "I'm doing what you men call using womanly intuition. I may be way off the track. But you get hold of your Canadian friend, and you pump him dry about this summer paradise of his. Find out if he's got a wife. If she's here with him, I'll go and call on her if necessary. And if you don't come home tonight with the name of that place—all about it, how you get to it, what it looks like—I'll take the children and go and live in a hotel in Newport all summer, and ruin you financially forever."

Her husband stared at her. Of course, she was smiling. But she was very much in earnest, too.

"All right, Immy," he said. To his great surprise, she came over to where he stood, put her arms about his neck, and kissed him. "I'll do all I can. But I don't see what you want with some dirty little Canadian village hundreds of miles away."

"Jim," his wife answered, almost whispering in his ear—and it was but seldom that she called him "Jim"; "Jim, I don't know what I want with it. But somehow—it seems to want me. It attracts me—just because it's hard to get to, and because—because the few people who go there love it so much that they want to keep others away. I've never heard of a summer place like that before. And, Jim, I've got a kind of hunch—an intuition, I mean—that it's just the place I've been looking for—for the children, and for myself—and, of course, for you, too."

"Of course," her husband repeated, "of course, for me, too."

As he went down the front steps, his wife wondered a little if he had meant anything by those last words!

PART I

CHAPTER ONE

Monsieur le Curé

"Au revoir, Monsieur le Curé."

"Au revoir, mes enfants. I am very happy to have seen you again. Au revoir, tout le monde."

The Reverend Gonzague Hervey lifted his stiff round hat and waved farewell to the little group of people that were getting into their calèches—the high two-wheeled carts of the Province of Quebec. They had come a long, long way to the mass that was said in that lonely tiny wooden church once each month by the Curé of Bonne Rivière, who had to drive over ten miles of rutted road in order to reach this most distant outpost of his ancient parish.

He was a young man for so large a curé. Rather short of stature, but with the stocky, powerful build of the French Canadian "habitant"—the people who have spoken the language of their forefathers and kept their faith ever since the first settler set foot on the banks of the St. Lawrence. His heavy, square face was a little pale and drawn beneath its healthy tan, for he had had no breakfast and had been forced to set out early that morning from his Presbytère at Bonne Rivière, in order to say mass at nine o'clock for the little group of farmers whose houses huddled here and there along the road—the road to Grand Fond, where all roads ended and where "The Woods," *Les Bois,* began.

Beside him, on the church steps, stood a thin, hatchet-faced young man, the type of habitant who has been worn thin in body and soul by the unending bitter effort to wring a living from the stony, unfertile ground of a small farm. His calèche was standing close by, the old ungroomed sorrel horse pawing restlessly at the ground. It had been his turn that Sunday morning to drive the Curé from Bonne Rivière; and now he wanted to get home as soon as possible. Corinne Gagnon, the eldest of the Gagnon daughters—old Gagnon, her father, was the village shoemaker, a man of some substance—would be waiting for him after the eleven o'clock mass at the parish church. If Monsieur le Curé did not stop mooning here at the top of the steps, he, Eli Martel, would probably arrive too late. And Eli, with his hard gray eyes that had a look of cruelty in them, was not accustomed to be too late for anything on which he had set his heart. So he coughed gently, went down to his calèche, and stood, waiting for the priest, at his horse's head.

But still the Curé delayed.

"Eli," he said, so abruptly that the man jumped and mechanically took off his cap. "Eli, you stood at the door during mass, did you not?"

Eli cringed a little and shot a questioning glance from the corner of his half-closed eyes. He was expecting a rebuke. Everyone at Bonne Rivière knew well enough that Eli Martel was not what was commonly called *pieux*. At mass he always stood in the aisle, as near the front door as possible; and he was out of church before the priest had said, *"Ite, missa est."* It was as though he were anxious to see as little of *le Bon Dieu* as possible.

"Mais oui, Monsieur le Curé," he stammered. "But the air in the church was close. So many people! So many old clothes! It makes me——"

The priest smiled, and over his rugged face there passed a kind of inner illumination, a look of understanding touched by a sense of humor. He knew his people. And Eli was one of them.

"Yes, yes, I know," he answered. He knew, too, that the church windows had been open and the building not half full. "But I ask for another reason. You saw all the people who came to mass. Did you see Amyas Dufour and his wife? Or the two Dufour children?"

Eli shook his head. The Dufours had not been there; of that he was sure. For he did not like Amyas Dufour; never had liked him even in the days before Dufour's marriage, when he lived at Bonne Rivière and before he had bought the farm at Grand Fond—the very last house of all at the end of the road, with nothing between it and the pathless woods.

"They have rarely missed before," the priest went on. Then he called to a solitary figure that was passing along the road. The man stopped, took off his hat, and shambled up to the church steps.

"Bonjour, Monsieur le Curé," he said, breathlessly. "I could not get to mass. My cow——"

The Curé cut him short, and spoke with him for a few minutes, while Eli shuffled his heels impatiently in the dust. Then as the man passed on, the priest came down the steps and put his hand on the edge of the waiting calèche. Eli started to turn the horse around.

"No, my son," said the priest. He spoke with unusual determination, as if he had just made up his mind about some doubtful matter. "My duty does not lie in that direction," he said, pointing backwards along the winding road that leads to Bonne Rivière. "I must go on—to Grand Fond."

"To Grand Fond!" Eli repeated; first amazed, then surly. "But that is five more miles. We cannot get home until——"

He looked into the priest's eyes and met there the look that had always enraged him even as a child—the look with which for centuries the Canadian priest has enforced unquestioning obedience—obedience not to himself but to the power that he represents. Eli might not like it; it might make him see red occasionally; but he yielded to it. He made, however, one mild protest.

"But, Monsieur le Curé, your breakfast?"

"My breakfast must wait," the priest answered, getting into the back seat of the calèche, while Eli climbed up on to the small, narrow ledge just behind the horse's flanks.

Eli did not quite like the tone in which the priest had spoken. It was bad business to have the Curé angry with you. Evidently the whole morning was going wrong, anyhow. To the commands of the church he had already sacrificed his meeting with Corinne; he might as well sacrifice another source of pleasure also. From beneath the seat of the calèche, under the priest's feet, he pulled out a rather dirty paper bag.

"If Monsieur le Curé will accept," he said, humbly, opening the bag. "It is chocolate. Monsieur le Curé will remember that I like—" his thin lips were twisted into a forced, crooked smile—"that I like sweet things."

Eli was thinking of how sweet a thing Corinne Gagnon was. He hoped that the Curé could not read his thoughts. Still, with these priests, one never knew how much they— He glanced back at the figure in its black, ungirt cassock, jerking to and fro on the seat as the calèche began to bounce over the uneven road.

"The chocolate will prevent Monsieur le Curé from having a headache," he added.

Now the Curé had one great "weakness of the flesh." He loved good food; what he called "the pleasures of the table." Above all, he loved sweets and desserts. Impulsively, he stretched out his hand toward the paper bag which Eli was offering over his shoulder. The next minute the small bar of sticky chocolate was already between his teeth, when he suddenly stopped, took it out of his mouth, and gazed at it.

Not ten minutes ago he had finished saying mass with a feeling of greater devotion than usual; and now, here he was, yielding again to temptation—to the "desires of the flesh." He started to throw the bar of chocolate away. But he hesitated. It was not right to destroy food when there were so many hungry people in the world. He took out his handkerchief, wrapped the chocolate in it, and put it back in his pocket. Later on he came to feel that his Guardian Angel, or perhaps his patron saint, Saint Louis Gonzaga himself, had kept him from flinging the sweet stuff into the bushes by the roadside.

Meanwhile, Eli was munching contentedly. After a moment he turned around and offered the priest the paper bag again.

"I have enough," said the Curé. "Finish it yourself." And Eli did so. Then, from one pocket of his jacket he produced a heavily caked pipe, and from another a handful of the dried tobacco leaves that the habitant used to grow in his own garden and dry on his own window sill. It was acrid, choking smoke that poured from Eli's pipe.

"Move back, and sit beside me," said the priest, touching Eli's shoulder. If Eli sat with him, on the back seat of the calèche, the smoke would not blow directly in the Curé's face.

Eli was pleased. This was a great honor. One saw what were the worldly advantages of feeding the clergy occasionally.

"Monsieur le Curé goes to see Amyas Dufour?" he asked, emboldened by the priest's kindness, as the two men sat side by side, with the reins trailing loosely over the little front seat, while the old horse trudged steadily onward, jerking the calèche over old, hard ruts or floundering through a cloud of dust.

"I am uneasy about the Dufours," the Curé answered. After all, it was better to talk. It would take his mind off his aching head, and off that bar of chocolate in the pocket of his cassock. "That farmer with whom I spoke a little while ago, as he was passing the church, he says that the Dufours have not been seen by any of their neighbors for the past six weeks. The last time that I said mass here, a month ago, they were not present. I thought nothing of it at the time. But when I did not see them today, I became anxious. You know how much sickness there has been in the parish this winter—this new disease, that they call *la grippe.* The French papers tell of it in the big cities. And at Bonne Rivière our good Doctor Lapointe has had many cases. He thinks perhaps that the postman from Quebec brought it with him in the foreign letters. Maybe. But who gets foreign letters here except the Seigneur? And then, the Dufours' farm at Grand Fond is at the end of everything. No doctor nearer than Bonne Rivière! And the roads impassable in the winter. So I have thought that perhaps Madame Dufour might be ill, too ill for her husband to leave her and come to mass today."

Eli smiled again, crookedly. This, after all, was not so bad. He, at any rate, had had his breakfast; he had had some chocolate; he was smoking a pleasant pipe; and he was sitting elbow to elbow with the Curé. Something to tell Corinne about. It would impress her—she was so *pieuse*. And besides, under the seat of the calèche there was a box with a bottle in it. While the Curé was calling on the Dufours, he, Eli, could— But the priest was speaking to him.

"What do you think about it yourself, Eli?"

This was just the chance that Eli had been waiting for. He had never liked Amyas Dufour.

"I think, Monsieur le Curé, that Dufour is not sick. He has only forgotten his religion. And there are sometimes husbands, you know, even among us, who will not let their wives go to church, at least not so often as they should."

"And what do you know about Amyas Dufour?"

The priest had a reason for his question. Dufour had always puzzled him. Somehow he seemed different from most of the other men in his parish.

Eli began to expand.

"Ah, Monsieur le Curé, I know—we all know—

perhaps too much. That is why Dufour sold the house that his father left him in the village and bought that God-forsaken farm at Grand Fond—miles from the nearest neighbor. And his poor little wife! I do not believe that she wanted to go so far away—all alone up there. In the winter not a soul passes their house, except perhaps some hunter or woodsman or *coureur des bois,*—some "*piqueur de gomme*" maybe, who stops for a drink or to say ten words. But Dufour, he would like all that. I tell you, Monsieur le Curé," and Eli's voice dropped to a hissing whisper, as though he were about to impart some appalling secret, "I would not like to say it of any man—but I tell you, Amyas Dufour—he has—he has *le cœur noir.*"

The priest nodded. *Le cœur noir!* He knew the expression and what it meant well enough. Once a man got the reputation of having "a black heart," people avoided and feared him. One who had *le cœur noir* was subject to long, brooding spells of silence, to sudden unaccountable outbursts of temper. Such a man carried a knife always and might kill if he were angered by some thoughtless word. In the old days, long before the Curé's time, there had been, so he had heard, a few Indians in his parish. Some of them had intermarried with the French farmer people. And nowadays, those in whom some Indian blood still ran did look a little different from the rest, did act in peculiar emotional ways, and did make people afraid of them. Because of this fear, because of this difference, they were said to have black hearts. And such men it was better to avoid.

So Amyas Dufour had *le cœur noir!* The Curé could not believe it. There was nothing of the Indian about Amyas. And yet, with his light hair and pale, untanned face, he did not look like the other men of the parish. Perhaps that was why the others said that he had a black heart; because they felt the presence in him of some alien stream of blood.

But to Eli's apparently appalling statement, the priest made no answer. Eli was rather disappointed. He had expected some expression of horror. He cast about in his mind for something still worse to say about this man with whom he was not on good terms.

"He hates the English," he went on, slapping the reins encouragingly on the horse's back, as the panting animal tugged up a dusty hill. "Not that I blame him for that. But he talks—or he used to talk too much about how the English do not belong here; of how they are only immigrants, while we—we who speak French—are the only true Canadians. Oh, he is older than I—ten years. But one hears things in the village. Once in the post office at Bonne Rivière, where it is law that the notices shall be printed in both French and English, he tears down all the English signs and cries out that they pollute the place. So the Judge, when he comes to our parish for the week's court, he talks with Amyas. Even today they tell of what Amyas says to that Judge. You ask the Sheriff, Monsieur Pednaud—ask him, Monsieur le Curé—for all this happens long before you come to us."

The Curé had grown rather interested. After all, he had been in the parish for only three years. It was wise to get what information he could about his people, even if some of it were mere gossip. With a nod of his head, he encouraged Eli to go on. Eli needed no encouragement. He had stopped talking a moment merely to refill his pipe.

"The Sheriff, Monsieur le Curé, is in the Judge's office when Amyas Dufour and the Judge talk together. The Judge, a kind old man from Quebec, a French Canadian, too, he tells Amyas that he must not talk too much; that the English are here to stay; that the French should be grateful to them for they have preserved to the French their language, their law, and their religion. But does Dufour understand that? No, Monsieur le Curé, not at all. He stands in the door of the Judge's office, and he says: 'If I cannot say what I think in the village, then I will go up near the woods, where no one can hear me talk. I will find for my family a farm, a long, long way off, on a high hill, where I can watch the river. And there I shall wait until I see the French fleet sailing up the St. Lawrence to capture Quebec and to sweep this land clean of English speech and English people, and to lay it once more at the feet of Our Lady and of the King of France.' And then—and now, Monsieur le Curé, comes the joke—for there is a joke in this story—ask Monsieur Pednaud, the Sheriff, he will tell you the same. And then, the Judge, he says, very quietly, to Amyas, he says, 'And when the French fleet comes sailing up the river, Dufour, what kind of flag will you see it flying?' And Dufour, the poor idiot, he draws himself up straight and he takes off his hat—the hat that he will not take off to the Judge because he is appointed by the English—and he says: 'What flag? Why, the white flag, of course; the white flag with the *fleur-de-lis.*' Then he dashes out. And the Judge, he laughs; and the Sheriff, he laughs too; because, you see, Monsieur le Curé, here is the joke—there is no more any French King; and there is no more any white flag with a *fleur-de-lis;* and yet that fool, Amyas, he does not know it! So, when the Judge finishes his laugh, he says to Monsieur Pednaud, the Sheriff, 'that fellow is just about one hundred years behind the times.' And that is what he is, Monsieur le Curé—one hundred years behind. And besides—he has *le cœur noir!*"

But the Curé did not laugh. Eli was disappointed. He was not making quite the impression that he had hoped to make. There had been something in the story of Amyas Dufour's anachronistic loyalty that had touched the priest. Ideals of any kind were rather rare in these days. He must learn something more about Amyas Dufour.

"But why, Eli," he asked, "why should Dufour hate the English so?"

Eli was in his element now. He had the Curé's attention at last, and an opportunity to speak evil of a man whom he hated. But he was a connoisseur in his strange way; he loved to taste his evil words to the utmost. So, secure of the priest's interest, he suddenly changed the subject.

"Look, Monsieur le Curé," he said, pointing with his broken old whip to a tall blackened chimney of plastered brick and stone that rose out of an ash heap already overgrown with early grass. "Do you remember that little house? Philippe Desbiens lived there. It must have burned down this winter."

"Ah, *mon Dieu,* the poor people!" the priest exclaimed. "Everything gone!" He shivered a little under his thick cassock. "Fire! I am afraid of it. All of us here in the country must fear it, I think. If it once starts, there is no hope——"

"Except in the prayers of God's Saints," Eli interposed, with a pious droop of his shifty eyes. How he was enjoying himself! Without seeming to criticize, he had delivered a mild rebuke to his spiritual pastor and master.

But the priest scarcely heard him. His own vivid imagination was picturing the scene that must have been played out a few months ago on this very spot by the roadside, where an old wooden house, with its dry thatched roof, had once stood. He could see it all. Snow up to the windows of the second story

—a windy night—and then in the dark hours before dawn, the stuffy rooms, with their hermetically closed windows, suddenly filling with smoke. The terrified wakening of the little family, the gathering together of a few clothes; and then—outside—outside—for everyone—out into the deep snow. And scarcely a moment later a tongue of flame under the thatch, fanned by the wind; then a roar, a cracking, a blaze—and the entire house is a flaming mass. The women of the family are kneeling in the snow—praying—praying; while the men stand, dumbly staring at the destruction of their home, their livelihood, everything that they had sweated and starved for in the past twenty years. And there is nothing to be done—nothing! The roads blocked with snow—the nearest neighbor half a mile away. Nothing to be done except to hope that someone has remembered to lead the one cow and the old horse out of the already smoldering barn. How such fires begin, no one ever knows. The houses are like dry tinder. Once fire has started, nothing can stop it—at least nothing in this world. What had Eli said about the prayers of the Saints? Why, even the Good God Himself could scarcely——

The priest checked his thoughts with an effort. He crossed himself. He had doubted for an instant the power and the loving care of God. His lips moved as he made a swift Act of Contrition. Then he turned to Eli, who had jumped out of the calèche and was urging the tired horse up a hill. Usually, in this part of French Canada people do not ride up hill in their carriages; they walk—except the priest when he is carrying the Blessed Sacrament to the sick or dying.

"No, do not get out, Monsieur le Curé," Eli protested, as the priest moved toward the side of the calèche. "We are nearly at the top now. And there—" he pointed ahead, down into the valley, at the farther end of which a little red roof stood out against the fresh spring leaves—"there is Grand Fond—and Amyas Dufour."

He gave to the man's name a sort of sneering emphasis, which he hoped would bring the priest's mind back to the subject of their earlier conversation.

"Ah, yes," said the Curé, glad to get away from a childhood memory of his own, when his father's farmhouse, near Tadousac, had been burned to the ground. "You were saying something about why Amyas used to hate the English so."

"Oh, he hates them still," Eli nodded, as he climbed back into the calèche and urged the horse down the road into the little valley. "He will hate them till he dies. Perhaps still in Purgatory he hates them. But what would you!" Eli gave his thin shoulders a kind of sarcastic shrug. "It is in his blood!"

Among other accomplishments, Eli was a good fisherman. He knew how to cast a fly over a soft ripple where some big trout had come up to feed.

And he knew how to strike the fish that he was after now. So he waited until the Curé asked curiously:

"In his blood? How?"

"Well, Monsieur le Curé," Eli began, tapping the ashes out of his pipe against the moving wheel of the calèche. "It may all be a lie. And perhaps people in the parish have forgotten all about it now. But my grandfather—you know he died only last winter at ninety—may he rest in peace!"—Eli crossed himself fervently—"he once told my father about Amyas—and about the mother of Amyas. They thought I was too young to understand. But I knew what they were talking about." His eyes lighted up with the memories of his first boyish interest in the secrets of sex. "The mother of Amyas—so said my grandfather—was of a very great beauty. All the young men of the parish thought so. And—there was an Englishman who thought so too." He hesitated a moment, as if he were too careful of his soul's health to meddle with such unclean matters. "She married young Étienne Dufour. He had been mad about her always. But he was, I think, mad some other way when her baby, Amyas, comes so soon. But he never said anything. And anyway, his wife died the next time she had a child—the village doctor was away—so she died. It was sad—but perhaps for the best. After a while Étienne married again. And people forgot. Only, my grandfather did not forget. And Amyas, he does not forget, either." Then, in a gust of hatred that shook from him all his pretense of impartiality, Eli spat out from between his teeth, "Why should he not hate the English, he who has bastard English blood in his veins?"

The young priest lifted a hand in rebuke. But now his interest was alive indeed. Although he had lived among these people for three years, how little he knew of the undercurrents that lay beneath the apparently placid surfaces of their lives! There was a question now in his mind. He knew that he ought not to ask it. For a moment he resisted. And Eli watched him resist, knowing that he would yield—they were both sprung from the same stock. Eli was confident that the big trout had taken his fly.

"And he—the Englishman," asked the Curé, slowly.

"Ah," said Eli, smacking his dry lips, "that is the very cream of the milk. It may be a lie, like all the rest, Monsieur le Curé—people tell so many lies, do they not?—but my grandfather told my father that the Englishman—he was young then, of course—that he was—figure it to yourself—the Seigneur of Mont Sainte Marie, himself."

The Curé turned on Eli so abruptly that he almost knocked the pipe out of his companion's hand.

"The Seigneur!" he gasped. "Impossible! You are out of your senses, Eli."

"Maybe, Monsieur le Curé; maybe. But then, other people were out of their senses, too. And my grandfather——"

"I do not wish to hear anything further. Hurry on; we are almost there."

As he turned away his head, Eli grinned cheerfully to himself. Whether he wished it or not, the Curé had heard; and he would not forget. Meanwhile, as the little red-roofed cottage came nearer and nearer, the Curé's mind was obsessed by one memory, the memory of the Seigneur of Mont Sainte Marie—the greatest, the most imposing figure at Bonne Rivière—the last of a line of Englishmen who for generations had held the enormous grant of ten miles along the river and ten miles inland into the unbroken forests. A grant, it was, that had been made originally by the French King to some settlers of noble blood. They had failed to make much of it, and from them it had been purchased by a young Scotchman, a Captain of Foot Guards, who had been wounded at the Capture of Quebec. He had settled here on the banks of the St. Lawrence, to found a dynasty and a family of his own, as proud of its name and possessions as royalty itself. Here, just beyond Bonne Rivière, the MacLeods had lived and reigned in the old whitewashed stone house, the Seigneurie Mont Sainte Marie, visiting the gaieties of Quebec in the winter, but always returning for the greater part of each year to their seigneurial domain, in which they were entitled by law to the old seigneurial rights—*droit* *du moulin* and all the rest—long, long years after the French Revolution had put an end to them in France itself. In the summer, visitors, officers and their ladies, professional men, bankers, and officials had often thronged the wide lawns before the old Seigneurie. But all this gaiety was of the past, for the Seigneur who now sat in his old stone house was over eighty, erect and dominating still, with his massive, powerful face that seemed to have been cut out of the same stone from which the old house had once been built. An Englishman with an Englishman's traditions, he was living in the midst of a people whose language he spoke imperfectly and whom he treated as though they belonged to some inferior race.

The Curé had had audience with the old Laird only three times, yet he always felt conscious of his presence—he owned so many of the farms; his interests and his powers were so far-reaching. And the priest, the representative, the ambassador of God Almighty and of Holy Roman Church, felt insignificant, almost inferior, in this man's presence, a man who was a heretic, an unbeliever, not even a good Protestant.

And yet, if Eli's tale were true, then this same man and Amyas Dufour—but it was impossible! He had been unwise to let Eli talk to him like that.

CHAPTER TWO

At the End of the Road

The calèche had come to a stop, and Eli was getting down. The priest looked up at the little red-roofed house that was set back from the end of the road, surrounded by a worn gray picket fence. The place was strangely silent. No sound of children's voices. Nothing to break the stillness except the panting of Eli's tired old horse.

"Dufour! Amyas Dufour!" shouted Eli.

There was no answer.

"Go up to the door and knock," said the Curé.

Eli went slowly up the little path. He seemed to be getting uneasy, and kept looking back over his shoulder, as though to assure himself of the priest's presence.

The Curé was staring, not at the house itself, but at the clumps of lilac bushes that grew close up to the side walls. He had seen those bushes move only a moment ago. Had he, for an instant, caught sight of a dark face—or at least of gleaming eyes—somewhere among the shadows of the branches?

"Who is there?" he called aloud.

Eli, who had lifted his hand to rap on the door, jumped at the sound of the priest's voice, and came running back to the calèche.

"Go round by those bushes," directed the priest. "I think I saw someone over there. Amyas and his wife may have gone out for a walk. But they've left someone behind, I'm sure. What are you waiting for?"

Eli was very pale under his tan. Beads of sweat stood on his forehead.

"There is something wrong here, Monsieur le Curé," he panted. "The door was half open. It must have been standing open a long time. Leaves and broken twigs and dirt are all heaped against it. No one has gone in that way—not for weeks."

"But I saw——"

"Then you saw something not of this world, Monsieur. I, too, heard the bushes rustle. But there is no one in that house, I tell you. Perhaps—" he added, as a pious afterthought—"perhaps the devil has carried off Amyas Dufour. I always thought that he would not come to any good end."

Eli's teeth were chattering. The priest climbed out of the calèche. There was nothing to be frightened about. And yet the absolute silence of the place—the untidiness—the dull windowpanes that had once gleamed so brightly in the sun—it was somehow disturbing—unusual. He put his hand in the pocket of his cassock, took a firm grasp on his rosary, and started up the garden path. But before he reached the door, he was halted by an exclamation behind him. He turned, to see Eli pointing to a little square plot of land at one corner of the fence.

In front of many habitant houses and scattered along the roads there are similar little squares of land. In the midst of them stands a high wooden cross, painted black. Fastened to the cross are the Instruments of the Passion, the cock that crew for St. Peter, the lance with which the Savior's side was pierced, the ladder, the sponge, the reed for the vinegar and the wine mingled with myrrh. Beneath the cross is a step or two, a place where one may kneel and say a prayer, as well as a few vases of rough colored glass, usually filled with wild flowers. Little wayside or household shrines, these are. And always—always—unless there is no human hand near by to tend them, they are kept in careful reverence and repair.

Eli was pointing to a spot where such a shrine had once stood. Now the cross lay on the ground. It had been broken in two, and the crossbeam looked as though someone had tried to chop it up with an ax. The vases were broken; the ladder and the lance were in pieces also. And the strange white bird, St. Peter's cock, that always stands on top of the cross, this had absolutely disappeared.

Nothing in the world could have given to Eli and the priest more absolute and definite proof that the house before them had not been inhabited for weeks—perhaps for months.

"Maybe it is Amyas himself who has done this," muttered Eli, seeking for some grain of comfort. "He sells his soul to the devil and then stamps upon the signs of his religion. Perhaps he——"

"Hush," said the priest, holding up his hand. He had pushed the front door open and was staring into a square room, the living room of the family. The usual pious pictures lined the walls; also a lithograph of the Holy Father side by side with a likeness of Laurier. But the crucifix over in a far corner was covered with cobwebs. In the center of the room was a table, with unwashed dishes, scattered and broken crockery—but no sign of food; not a trace.

Suddenly a shrill, frightened cry broke the silence. The priest wheeled about. Eli was on his knees. His face was covered with one hand, while with the other he was making frantic attempts to find his rosary in his coat pocket.

The priest shook him roughly. "What is it?" he demanded.

"I have seen it," Eli wailed. "I have seen it. It is because I had evil thoughts about Amyas Dufour and spoke badly of him behind his back. But I repent—I repent——"

"What has happened?" commanded the priest. But Eli persisted.

"I confess to God Almighty, to Blessed Mary ever Virgin—that I have sinned grievously—by thought——"

The priest shook him again.

"Listen," he said, sharply. "There is nothing to fear. See, I make the sign of the cross. I bless this house. And now, for God's sake, what did you see?"

"It was a devil, I think," chattered Eli. "While Monsieur le Curé was standing by the table, I looked—there—" he pointed to a window on the other side of the room—"and I saw—I saw a face—with long black hair and shining eyes. And it made motions at me. It made——"

"Well, what did it do? Out with it." The priest was growing more and more ill at ease. Someone must be lurking somewhere about the deserted house. Besides, every now and then he caught a whiff of a nauseating odor that snatched at his throat and made his head swim.

"I am ashamed to make that motion before Monsieur le Curé. Surely, it must have been an evil spirit."

"But what did it do? Listen, Eli, I must know."

"Through the window, at me—it did—it did—this."

In a shamefaced, distressed manner, Eli, who as a boy had made the same gesture ten thousand times himself, put his thumb gently to his nose, and spread his fingers out.

In spite of himself, the Curé laughed. But the laugh died in his throat. It seemed as though someone else had laughed, had snickered—and it was not Eli. It could not have been. The sound must have come from beyond that door on the right, the door that led, as he knew well enough, into the family bedroom. It was ajar; someone could have been watching him through the crack.

He pulled Eli to his feet. As he did so, that same fetid odor reached him again. Eli caught it, too. And now he looked at the priest with a dawning understanding in his eyes. He shrank back and away.

"We must go into that room over there," said the priest. Instinctively, he had lowered his voice. He spoke in the hushed tones that he was accustomed to use in a house where someone lay dead.

"No Monsieur le Curé," Eli panted. "No, I cannot. But I will go as far as the door with you."

The priest walked slowly across the floor, Eli following, as far behind as he dared. As the Curé laid his hand on the latch, he felt with his other hand for his big colored handkerchief, and held it across the lower part of his face. Then, as the door swung open, he lifted his right hand as in benediction, and walked in.

Eli waited outside. But little by little he edged away from the door, for the odor that had been but faint before, now poured forth from the darkened room in waves of overpowering, choking stench. Eli did not like it; but he did not mind it. It was a human smell; he knew what it was.

A few moments later the priest reappeared. It was icy cold in the deserted house, but the sweat was pouring off his face. He said nothing as he hurried to the front door and leaned against the jamb, inhaling long gasps of clean air.

Eli coughed; he was curious. "Monsieur le Curé," he began, hesitatingly. "Did you see—did you see anything?"

The Curé had taken off his worn black-felt hat. Clasping it to his breast, he crossed himself.

"Requiem æternam dona eis Domine," he began.

And Eli, who had once been an altar boy, understood and made proper response.

"Et lux perpetua luceat eis."

Then followed the "De Profundis," and "Our Father," and a "Hail Mary"—for the repose of the Faithful Departed.

After the last amen, the priest stood motionless, until Eli broke the silence.

"Amyas, Monsieur le Curé?" he whispered.

The Curé nodded. "And his wife also," he said. "Four weeks ago; perhaps longer. Who can tell? Both falling ill together, and no one here to help."

"No one except the two children," Eli interposed.

The Curé looked up quickly. "I had forgotten the children!"

After a moment's hesitation, Eli asked, "Are they also—in there?"

The Curé shook his head. Then a look of understanding smoothed out the sternness of his face.

"I begin to understand, Eli," he said. "Those devils of yours—in the bushes—and at the window —we must catch them somehow."

The change in Eli was immediate. It seemed as though a load of fear had suddenly been lifted from his mind. With the unseen world of evil, he could not cope. But with two dead people, and two children run wild—ah, that was different. He started quickly for the back of the house. But the priest held up his hand.

"Not that way," he said. "By this time they are like wild, frightened animals. I wonder that they did not make their way to the nearest house! But I forget—it had burned down. And probably the roads were blocked. How old are they, Eli?"

"The boy, perhaps ten. The girl, older, a little. Not Amyas' child, I think. Born after Madame Dufour's first husband had been killed by a falling tree—logging, in the winter."

The Curé turned abruptly to Eli again. "Have you anything—anything to eat in the calèche—in your pockets—anywhere?"

Eli shook his head. There was nothing beneath the seat of the calèche except that bottle. Of this, the less said, the better.

"I ate all the chocolate," he stammered.

As he spoke, the priest dived down into the deep pocket of his cassock and brought up the big colored handkerchief in which was wrapped the sticky, soft chocolate bar that still bore marks of his teeth.

"God has sent us this," he said simply. "Now, do as I tell you. Come here to the table. Arrange what is left of the dishes as if for a meal. They will be hungry, those children. Look at that!" He pointed to one of the tin dishes that had been scraped and scraped with a blunt knife, as though to remove from it the very last, smallest remnant of food. "We will pretend to eat," he said.

Eli set the table as best he could. He did not understand what the priest was after; but then, you never could tell about priests. The best thing was to obey—or to pretend to do so. Then he pulled out a chair, ready to sit down. But the priest checked him.

"Amyas Dufour may have hated the English," the Curé said, "but he would never have sat down to eat of unblessed food."

So over the bare table, in that strangely still house, the priest made the sign of the cross and asked God's blessing on "what we are about to receive."

"Now," he whispered to Eli, "pretend to eat as if you were very greatly enjoying your dinner. Imagine that you have before you a large plate of your favorite food. It is not polite, I believe, to smack the lips, but smack them, nevertheless. Eat with pleasure—and with noise."

It was a strange meal that those two men made a pretense of eating. Eli, having a sense of the dramatic, like all his race, soon forgot himself in his efforts to follow the Curé's instructions.

"And now," whispered the priest, "lean back, and stretch, as if filled with good food. Wipe your lips—smack them again—but do not look around—I have seen a face at the back window. Now, get up. I will give thanks in the customary manner. Then walk to the front door—slowly."

The Curé slipped his handkerchief from his pocket, took out the chocolate, broke it in half, and laid one piece on the plate from which he had pretended to eat, but he kept the other in his hand. Then he joined Eli.

"Go out quietly—go around the house—keeping away from the bushes. Get to the back door. Close it. If a window is open, close or watch that also. I thought that I heard the floor creak just now. Our little mice are in the trap."

Eli disappeared, moving quietly, taking time to light his pipe. The priest closed the front door softly behind him, and sat down on the doorstep.

Five minutes passed. He could not hear a sound. Perhaps the children were not there after all. But if they were, he knew that he must get his hands on them at once. If he sent out a group of neighbors to run them down in the woods, they might escape into the unbroken forests, wander away like terrified animals, and starve to death.

Suddenly he heard the clink of a tin saucer—a muffled cry—and the rattle of a plate as it fell to the floor. He tiptoed to the window and looked in.

Two wild little figures were standing beside the table. Had he not known that the older was a girl, he could not have recognized her sex at all. She was naked, except for a huge, tattered coat of homespun that reached nearly to her knees. Her face was gaunt, burned almost black, scratched, and bleeding; her hair hung in long tangled wisps, out of which two keen, black eyes darted in every direction around the room. The smaller figure, evidently the boy, wore remnants of what must once have been his own clothes. He looked starved—and very ill. His eyes were dull, his skin dry and baggy.

Apparently the girl had picked up the tin plate on which the chocolate lay, and the boy had snatched it from her. Now the girl was holding the chocolate in her hand. She put it to her lips. Her face lighted up with a smile of satisfaction. Her mouth opened wider, ready to devour every bit of the wonderful thing. Just then her eyes met the dull eyes of the boy. Slowly she took the chocolate from her mouth, broke it in two, and held the larger piece out to her brother. The Curé waited until both mouths had begun to move, until the lips had parted in smiles. Then he opened the front door and walked into the room.

Without a sound—without a cry—the two figures turned, and dashed away on their bare feet. But the back door was closed now. In the kitchen they cowered, crouching down against this door, and staring up at the Curé.

He began to speak to them in a quiet voice. Told them who he was, why he had come. They became slightly quieter. But when he put out his hand to touch the boy's shoulder, the girl flew at him. Eli, who had returned by the front door and was now standing behind the priest, had his hands full to drag her away.

"We must get them into the calèche somehow, Eli," the priest said. "But how? I hate to tie them up."

Then he caught sight of a smudge of chocolate at the corner of the girl's mouth. He took from his pocket the other half of the chocolate bar. Holding her eyes with his own, he showed it to her, then slowly put it between his own teeth, making a great show of enjoying it. Out went her hand toward him. He put a bit of the chocolate into her dirty fingers, watched her break it in two, and give half of it to the boy.

"Listen, my children," said the Curé, quietly; "you will come now with me; and you shall have more of this chocolate—much more. If you are good, I will take you both to ride with me."

The children's eyes were fastened hungrily on the bit of chocolate still left in the priest's hand. He held it out; they followed. Slowly at first. In order to get them over the threshold of the front door, he had to give them both another morsel. By the time he had persuaded them to come near the calèche, the chocolate was all gone. What should he do now if on the way home they became rebellious again?

But the sight of the horse seemed to have a reassuring effect on both children. They patted its nose. They spoke to it—the first articulate words they had used. And then, suddenly, they looked at one another, and broke out into a stream of voluble French. The fear that had inhibited all their mental reactions seemed to dissolve.

The girl looked down at her bare legs and tried to cover them with the end of the worn homespun jacket. But the boy was apathetic—too hungry, too ill, to be aware of anything.

Eli put the children on the floor of the calèche.

"Better go back and close all the doors and windows, Eli," the Curé suggested. "We'll send some of the neighbors out here tomorrow. They can make two graves over there." He pointed to the dilapidated little shrine, with its fallen black cross. "And I will say the Requiem at Bonne Rivière."

But Eli drew back. He had no intention of going into that house again, and all by himself. If only he *had* gone! Then so many complications might have been avoided. However, Eli's determination held firm even to the verge of rebellion against ecclesiastical authority.

"Then I will go myself," said the priest.

He seemed to be gone a long time. Perhaps, thought Eli, there were evil spirits there, after all, and Monsieur le Curé was exorcizing them. But at last the short, stocky black figure appeared again on the threshold of the little red-roofed house, and closed the front door after it, very, very gently.

As he clambered with difficulty into the body of the swaying calèche, trying to make room for his feet between the bodies of the two children, the priest looked, to Eli, very sick and shaken.

"Quel matin, Monsieur le Curé!" he exclaimed, as he slapped the reins on the back of his horse. "What a Sunday morning! Or afternoon, nearly! And you with no breakfast yet! But I will hurry. We can drop these two wild ones at the house of Xavier MacNicoll. They lost two children this winter. And these, once they are fed up, could be useful on the farm. Especially this *créature.*"

In French Canada, among the habitants, *une créature* means a woman. No unpleasant suggestion is intended. And a *créature,* especially if she be not of marriageable age, is often of more use on a farm than a boy of the same years.

"No," said Monsieur le Curé, making at that moment one of the great decisions of his life. "I am taking them to Bonne Rivière. At first to the Presbytère."

Eli almost dropped the reins.

"But, Monsieur le Curé—there is no room! Your housekeeper——"

"No matter," the Curé answered. His head was aching so badly that he could scarcely think. But two things had happened to him as he stood in the house of Amyas Dufour only a few minutes ago—stood at the bedside, looking down at what had once been Amyas and his wife. "The Good God will make room. For the past year I have been thinking what to do with our few orphaned children. Our people are kind. They will always make room in their families for one orphan, especially for a girl, but nobody wants the boys when they are little—and it is often hard on the children themselves."

He was silent for a moment. Then, as though he felt that he must confide in someone, he added:

"You need not mention it in the village just yet, Eli, but I am going to found an *orphelinat*. God has sent me this day the first two children."

He looked down into the face of the tattered, starved boy at his feet. The boy was staring up at him, his heavy eyelids flickering wearily over his grayish blue eyes. He looked like an ordinary habitant child, nothing particularly unusual about his features. Yet he was different, somehow. He had not whimpered, or complained; he was not restless. He must be half starved—ill—in pain. And yet his eyes looked straight ahead, and his dirty, smudged lips were set in a tiny bright-red line.

"Well," said Monsieur le Curé to himself, staring at Eli's back, that had assumed an attitude of definite antagonism—the antagonism of the French Canadian to everything that is new and untried. "Well, even if I can't have the girl in my orphanage —and I suppose it wouldn't do, after all—at least, I will have the boy. I know of three others, too. Somehow, I feel as if God had sent him to me. Yes —yes—God sends me an orphan—I must make an orphanage to keep him in."

The sun was very hot. His head was getting worse and worse. But he would try to say an office, and get through Vespers, anyway. The children at his feet were quiet now. It was only another two miles to the nearest farm; they would all stop there for something to eat. He reached down into the capacious pocket of his cassock for his Breviary. But his hand came in contact with a book that his fingers did not recognize.

That was the second thing that had happened to the Curé a little while ago, in the cottage of the Dufours. He withdrew his hand, and rubbed his fingers on his big handkerchief. A distressing smell still clung to the little book that he had noticed as he leaned over the bed of Amyas Dufour for the last time. It had been clasped in the dead man's hand or in what was left of it. The Curé had taken the book, scarcely knowing why. He had not even glanced at it yet. Then he looked down again at the boy at his feet, whose eyes were still fastened on his own.

"I will keep the book for him," he said, half aloud. "Poor child! His only inheritance I carry here—in my pocket—and—it does not smell very sweet."

PART II

CHAPTER ONE

Les Beaux Jours

It was three years since the J. Barton Randolphs, by the merest chance, had first gone for their summer holiday to a little village in French Canada. In the beginning the family had lived in a small and smelly habitant house, where they had been immensely uncomfortable but, to Mrs. Randolph's surprise, exceedingly happy. So happy that the children had insisted on returning the following year. And living was so cheap there that Colonel Randolph had been persuaded to build a cottage of his own. Not that he saw much of the place and the people in his ten-day holiday in July; but what he did see, he liked. Besides, Mrs. Randolph liked it. And that was of infinitely more importance.

"One can scarcely believe one's eyes, dear Mrs. Aspinwall," Mrs. Randolph murmured in the ear of a very distinguished looking, white-haired matron who was enthroned on the most comfortable chair at the edge of Mrs. Randolph's new veranda. "There have been such changes here in the past three summers. I mean, of course, changes that we late comers notice. To you, naturally, who have known this place so long——"

"Ten years," sniffed Mrs. Aspinwall, in a distant, rather reproving tone. "Ten summers of really simple life—and no changes to speak of until you Americans came."

Mrs. Randolph bridled in the dark, for there was no doubt about what her guest meant. But the next moment the attention of both women was turned to a glowing fire in the midst of an expanse of grass below them. Around it a group of young people were talking, singing, occasionally stirring with a stick the contents of a large cooking pot that swung to and fro on a tripod over the fire. It was mid-August. People in the "States" were dying of the heat; but here on the north bank of the St. Lawrence the air was cool and fragrant—cool from the expanse of the river below, and fragrant from the pine-covered slopes of the Laurentian hills behind.

Some slight sound made Mrs. Randolph again aware of her guest's disapproval. Yes, of course, it was because of Corinne, her waitress. There was to be nothing but ice cream and cake, but Corinne wore a clean white apron and a cap, and the table would be attractively set. From Mrs. Aspinwall, who came from Ottawa and whose family and relatives had been living in roughly built summer cottages of their own when Mrs. Randolph spent her first summer in a rented habitant house, Mrs. Randolph could pass over a moderate hint of criticism of "Americans," but even a suggestion of disdain must not be allowed to take root.

"I have been so fortunate in finding servants here, you know. Now Corinne, my waitress——"

"Corinne Gagnon?" Mrs. Aspinwall almost snorted. "I've known her since she was a dirty, rickety baby. I can't see why you Americans don't bring your own maids with you from the States, instead of dressing up some of the habitant girls and making them dissatisfied with their place in life. Oh, I know—" she waved a condescending hand, in the darkness, just beneath Mrs. Randolph's firm and rather prominent nose— "I know that my own young people when they go into the woods take some of the habitant men as guides or cooks. But that is different. I should not think of taking one of them into my house. Indeed, Mrs. Randolph, you do not understand racial conditions here. The French element—the Roman Catholic element—" she bit off her words with a kind of concentrated antagonism—"must be kept in its place."

Just then a girl of about twenty, her dark hair heaped up in soft, disordered masses about a face flushed from leaning over the fire, dashed up the steps of the veranda.

"Oh, Mother," she panted, "the *sucre* is ready to pour out, and we've forgotten to have a pan ready!" Catching sight of her mother's guest, she stopped, and held out her hand. "I'm sorry, Mrs. Aspinwall. In the dark I didn't see you. Isn't all this fun?

And yet we're doing nothing except sit around a fire and sing songs and stir a pot that's full of fresh maple sugar and cream. I suppose it's an old story for you." She held up her hand. "Listen! Your son's going to sing 'Isabeau,' Mrs. Aspinwall. I really don't know what we should do without him."

From the dark shadows on the grass at the foot of the veranda steps, a fresh young baritone voice came softly through the quiet of the night.

Isabeau s'y promène
Le long de son jardin.

To Mrs. Aspinwall all this was indeed an old story. But she did not entirely approve of her only son's enthusiasm for old French Canadian songs.

"You should hear him sing 'A Warrior Bold,'" she murmured to Mrs. Randolph.

"You must be so proud of him," Mrs. Randolph whispered. "He has quite fascinated my young people with his love for this place—and for the people who live here. My daughter feels——"

"My son is often unwise in his enthusiasm," interrupted the older woman. "I tell you that these habitants are people of an inferior race—and, believe me, often dangerous. Look at that face." She pointed toward the fire. In its light there was visible for a moment the sharp outlines of a low forehead, a thin, cruel nose, and a hard, cruel mouth. "That," she went on, "is Eli Martel. He is, I believe, a follower of that—that maid or waitress of yours.

He probably spends a good deal of his time hanging about your kitchen. You see, Mrs. Randolph, if you take one of them into your house, you take the whole family—the whole tribe, eventually."

Mrs. Randolph became a little uneasy. She did not care to mention that at Corinne's suggestion she had engaged Eli to lay out the tennis court which she was planning for next summer, at the back of the house. Another figure came dashing up the steps—a very young man, wearing knickerbockers of gray homespun and a very old gray sweater. The light from the fire shone for a second on his light, towsled hair, and was reflected from his excited, dancing, blue eyes.

"Mother," he panted, "where is Anne? We told her to get a pan."

"Here, Robin, you idiot," said a voice behind them. And the young man snatched something from the hand of his sister, who had just come to the door, and dashed back again, down the veranda steps, to the fire.

"Perhaps you are right," said Mrs. Randolph, as she leaned somewhat closer to Mrs. Aspinwall's chair. "Robin is so impressionable. I rather dread the life at Princeton for him next year, after the protected atmosphere of his school. I don't worry so much about Anne. She has her golf. And the two younger girls are mere children yet."

"Well," answered the cold, restrained voice at her side, "at least I have warned you." Then, after a moment's hesitation, Mrs. Aspinwall went on, as though she had suddenly decided that this was a good opportunity to say something that had long been on her mind. "We English Canadians, you know, have been rather jealous of this bit of country here. We like the simplicity of the life. The air is remarkably stimulating, and as none of us are very wealthy, we appreciate the inexpensiveness of living here. So we have not welcomed Americans. Indeed, I may say that we have—well, we have frightened off one or two American families. In fact, when you first came—we were——"

"Ready to frighten us off too, I suppose," interposed Mrs. Randolph. The sweet, disarming smile that accompanied her words was lost in the darkness; but she could not keep a little bitterness out of her voice.

Her companion did not notice this, however, for she answered briefly, "Quite. That is, at first. But gradually your young people and mine came together. Your daughter greatly helped my son in laying out the first golf links. And then we realized, little by little, that you were not raising prices here by overpaying the tradespeople; that in spite of your wealth you were willing to live as simply—sometimes even more simply—than we ourselves. And so, as you will remember—I—I came to see you—myself——"

"In that awful little habitant house, where we lived in such happy discomfort that first summer," interjected Mrs. Randolph, entirely at her ease now, despite her amazement. Her necessary economies, her husband's determination that she should have "a cheap summer," had been interpreted as the high-bred restraints of a wealthy and distinguished family! But could she ever forget the first four weeks of that summer, three years ago now, when she had been ready, many a time, to pack up and get out of "this French Canadian hole" where the few people that spoke English were just ordinary English Canadian business families, who behaved as though they owned the entire place and had lived there since its creation!

"I shall never forget your kindness," she went on, more surely, "or your help. In building this cottage I have tried to keep it simple; as much—as much like yours as possible."

"Simple!" the other retorted. "With two bathrooms—and a maid! But I suppose it cannot be helped. However, this must be the limit. We must definitely oppose anything more ornate. And next summer perhaps it would be wise if you and I should decide on the prices that we are willing to pay the butcher and the other tradespeople. But above all, Mrs. Randolph," and the high, white head, held so stiffly on the thin shoulders, bent slightly, ever so slightly, toward Mrs. Randolph's shoulder, "remember one thing. You, naturally, being an American, have never had any traditions in—what shall we call it?—in 'empire making.' None of your ancestors ever learned to live among an alien, inferior race and at the same time keep up his own standards and ideals. The Indian Civil Service —the Chinese Customs—and all that. It is in our blood, you see. We understand how to deal with—with natives. Here, in this charming place—" she made a broad, regal gesture toward the waters of the St. Lawrence that lay glittering in the moonlight a few hundred yards from where she sat—"we have the same conditions to deal with. Remember, young people are impressionable. And you Americans often have such peculiar ideas about equality —although you do not extend it, do you, to your Negroes? Our young men must take care of themselves, up here. The habitant girls are attractive sometimes, but not permanently so. It is our young women, however—our grown girls—whom we must guard. In dealing with these habitants, they must never forget that they are dealing with an inferior, untrustworthy——"

Mrs. Aspinwall stopped suddenly. Behind her, in the shadow, she had heard a suppressed laugh, a giggle, almost a snicker. "Who is there?" she demanded, angrily.

The figure of a girl came forward into the reflection of the light from the fire, at the foot of the veranda steps. She stood in front of Mrs. Aspinwall, her head thrown slightly back.

"It is I, Mrs. Aspinwall, Anne Randolph. I couldn't help hearing what you said. Forgive me if I seemed rude, but honestly, you're wrong. Eli Martel may look like a brute—perhaps he is a brute sometimes—but he's a good guide, and a better fisherman. I shouldn't hesitate to go off alone with him in a boat while we were in camp. He'd bring me back safely. And he'd never touch me with the tip of his finger. It simply wouldn't occur to him. If it did occur to him to touch me, it would be because I had put the idea into his mind myself. Oh, I know that these people are what you call ignorant; and yet they know a lot of things that I'd be glad to know myself. And they're *not* inferior——" Anne was losing her temper—"they're not—and your son, Mrs. Aspinwall, doesn't think so either!"

She dashed off down the veranda steps, almost colliding with a young man, older by a few years than Robin Randolph. He also had on homespun knickerbockers, but he looked less sloppy than Robin, for his soft white collar was banded with a tie, and he wore a short jacket of blue flannel. In his hands he carried a shallow biscuit pan filled with a warm mass of *sucre,* about an inch deep, cut up into small squares.

"It's just ready to eat, Mrs. Randolph," he exclaimed. "And we've made it exactly right this time. Anne is a wonderful mixer. You must have the first piece." Then peering through the shadows, he added, "Hello, Mother, is that you? Have some *sucre,* do."

Mrs. Aspinwall had risen to her feet. "I think, Henry, that I must ask you to take me home. I do not feel——"

But Anne had turned back, and was standing beside Henry Aspinwall. "Please, Mrs. Aspinwall, don't go and spoil the party." Turning to Henry, she went on, "Do make her stay. It's all my fault. I—I lost my temper, like an idiot—about the habitants. They aren't so bad, Henry, are they? Tell her about my caddie from the orphanage. What was his name? Such a funny one! Oh, Amyas. And about——"

But Henry had no time to tell his mother anything. On the short, graveled road that led up to the Randolphs' cottage from the village street, a moving light appeared, and the group around the fire and those on the veranda heard the crunching on the gravel of a horse's hoofs. A calèche drew up at the foot of the veranda steps. Anne and Henry Aspinwall went down to meet it.

Mrs. Randolph heard her daughter's voice, lifted in sudden surprise. "Why, Henry, can't you see who it is? It's Monsieur le Curé from the lower village, from Bonne Rivière."

A dark figure leaned out from the back seat of the calèche and spoke for a moment in French with the young man. Henry hurried up the steps, to where his mother and Mrs. Randolph were still standing.

"It's the parish priest, Mother—it's about the Laird—at Mont Sainte Marie. He's very ill."

"Who?" demanded Mrs. Randolph. "I don't understand."

"He means the Seigneur, Mother," Anne explained. "You know, that wonderful old man, who lives all alone in the big white house beyond Bonne Rivière. The Lord of the Manor."

"It seems that the Laird was taken ill last night," Henry continued. "He's got no one with him at the Manor except an old man-servant. The doctor at Bonne Rivière is off somewhere on a case. When the Laird's servant couldn't find him, he went to the Curé. And the Curé says that the Laird must have a doctor, and he ought to have a nurse. He thought that perhaps there might be a doctor among us here at Cap à l'Ours. He does not think that the Laird is dying. But he is over seventy. And he ought to have someone to look after him."

As he finished speaking, Anne, who had run off to the little group of young people, came dashing back, pushing before her a very embarrassed young man.

"Here's James MacPherson," she panted. "His father's a doctor. And he's a medical student at McGill. He says he doesn't know anything. But Monsieur le Curé had better take him to the Manor until Doctor Lapointe gets back. Go ahead now, James. The Laird won't hurt you."

She was bundling the protesting young man into the calèche, when she caught up the lantern that was swinging on the left shaft and held it higher.

"Why, it's Amyas!" she exclaimed, staring at the small figure standing on the front step of the calèche, holding the reins. "Are you driving Monsieur le Curé?"

The boy's wide blue eyes stared up at her, as she stood above him with the light from the lifted lantern streaming over her head and shoulders. He had seen her before, on the golf links, where the Curé allowed some of the older boys from the orphanage to act as caddies in this new, strange game of the English summer residents. He had carried her clubs many times, but he had scarcely looked at her face. Now he was gazing up into the kindly brown eyes that twinkled with good humor in the glow of the lantern. His thin shoulders trembled under the touch of her firm, brown hand, and from that moment she became the very center of his boyish imagination; she became—in some strange way—"his Mademoiselle."

"Amyas is a good caddie, Monsieur le Curé," he heard her say in her stiff French. "What is his other name?"

"Tell Mademoiselle what she asks, Amyas," said the priest, from the back seat of the calèche.

Amyas caught hold of the little dashboard and pulled himself up very straight. Grasping the reins in one small hand, he tugged off his cloth cap with the other. His voice sounded strange in his own ears. "Amyas Dufour, Mademoiselle." And then he added in a whisper, "À votre service."

"Thank you, Amyas. I shan't forget." Then Anne Randolph turned to the dark figure in the back seat of the calèche. "Au revoir, Monsieur le Curé. Mr. MacPherson will do what he can, I'm sure. I hope the Seigneur will be better tomorrow. Here's the lantern, Amyas." While the boy was fastening it to the shaft, she leaned impulsively toward the shadowy figure of the priest. "Oh, Monsieur le Curé," she asked, impulsively, "do tell me something. The Seigneur never married, did he? So if—if anything should happen to him, who would inherit the Seigneurie? Forgive my curiosity. But I'm so—so interested in everything up here."

The Curé lifted his stiff, round-brimmed hat.

"We are much flattered by your interest, Mademoiselle," he said in the precise, unaccented French that the son of the most uncouth French habitant learns to speak in the Seminary at Quebec. "Should the good God take the Seigneur to Himself, Mont Sainte Marie passes to a cousin in Montreal, the only son of the Seigneur's sister." Reaching quickly forward, he touched Amyas on the arm. "Make haste, mon enfant." With his hand still on the boy's shoulder, he looked back at Anne. "A pity, is it not, Mademoiselle," he added, "that the Seigneur has no son! Bonsoir. And many thanks."

Anne stood watching the calèche as it turned and started down the gravel road that led to the village street. The young people around the fire had stopped talking, and Henry Aspinwall was standing by the tripod, the firelight on his face.

"All right," he was saying, "I'll sing one more song. And then we'll go into the house. There's ice cream—actually ice cream—in this remote place. What shall I sing?"

Anne cupped her lips in her hand and called down, "Henry! Henry! Sing *'Que les beaux jours sont courts.'* "

The clear, young voice began, in the hush of the summer night.

Quand j'ai vu Madeleine pour la première fois,
Elle montait la colline; moi, je sortais des bois.
Et quand le dimanche, elle était tout en blanc,
Elle allait sous les branches,
Que les beaux jours sont courts.

Anne, listening eagerly to her favorite song, found it as always so full of sadness, so haunting, so beautiful. "How short are happy days!"

Quand j'ai vu Madeleine pour la dernière fois,
Ses mains sur sa poitrine semblait—

But Anne's attention wandered. A sound, a disturbing sound, was coming from the village street below—a horse galloping fast on the hard road.

"Somebody drunk in the village," she murmured, in disgust. "The poor horse!"

But the galloping horse did not pass along the village street. It turned in at the gate of the Randolphs' house, and came dashing up the little graveled road, behind it a calèche, swaying from side to side. Standing up on the shafts was a small figure, urging the horse on. It was Amyas Dufour, panting and excited.

"Mademoiselle, Mademoiselle," he stammered, as Anne ran down the veranda steps. "There is fire in the village. Monsieur le Curé sends me back to tell you. It is Pierre Trembley's house—where the men drink. See!" He pointed up the village street to the left, where a red glow was visible above the trees. "And the wind is blowing straight down the street. Blowing this way."

"But, Amyas," Anne interposed, "there can't be any danger. That house is two hundred yards off."

"The fire will come here, Mademoiselle," panted the boy, "unless the wind changes."

"But what must we do—what——"

"Get everything out of your house—and then pray to the Saints—pray that the wind may change."

"Nonsense," Anne retorted. "You go back and tell the Curé that I am bringing with me all these young people here. We'll make a line from the river, with buckets. We'll put out the fire. You can help us. Come on."

She darted down the veranda steps just as Henry Aspinwall had finished the last verse of her song:

Que les beaux jours sont courts.

CHAPTER TWO

Water and Prayers

An hour later, Anne Randolph, panting, disheveled and half soaked, caught hold of her brother Robin's arm, as he dashed back from a burning house toward the river below, with an old tin bucket bumping against his knees.

"It's no use, Robin," she panted. "We've been pouring water on that roof," pointing to a cottage that had not yet begun to burn but that was already lighted up by the flames from the nearest house; "but the burning sparks keep dropping on the shingles. In another minute that roof will be burning, too."

"Ah, Mademoiselle," said the Curé, holding his hand before his face to protect it from the glare of the fire, "Thank God that I meet you. The fire is moving straight down the village street. Between your new cottage and this—" he made a hopeless gesture toward the flaming habitant house—"there are only five houses more—five houses more—and—the little church."

Anne put out her grimy hand with a gesture of understanding.

"What a pity," she murmured.

The Curé went on, his voice mingling in Anne's ears with the roar of the flames.

"Not much of a church, perhaps, but all that the people have here at Cap à l'Ours. I helped them build it. The parish church at Bonne Rivière is so far away. And now—but doubtless——" He hesitated for a moment, seemed to gather his thoughts together, and took off his broad-brimmed hat. "Doubtless it is the will of God."

"It need not be the will of God," interposed Robin, who had come dashing back again from the river with a filled bucket and had stopped for an instant at his sister's side. "I say, it needn't be if only these foolish people of yours would be of some use. Since the fire began, they haven't done a single thing to help us carry water from the river. The men are sitting up there somewhere on the hill; and the women, as soon as they saved what they could from their houses, all rushed to the church to pray. Much good that will do if the wind holds as it is."

The Curé smiled up into the young man's face; Anne could see both faces, so different and yet so much alike—lit up, as they were, by the intense glare of the burning house.

"We are grateful for all that you are doing, Monsieur," the priest said. "But you will pardon me if I point out that up to the present your efforts have done no more to check this disaster than the prayers of my poor, terrified people. Less, perhaps. However, I beg you to return at once to your own house. See that whatever you wish to save is taken out at once and put in the fields—way up in the fields—behind your cottage. Mademoiselle will stay here and keep on helping her kind compatriots to put out the fire with buckets of water from the St. Lawrence. Meanwhile, I—and my people—well, we know what fire means in this part of the world, and we—we will keep on with our prayers."

Robin thrust his bucket into Anne's hand and disappeared in the darkness. The Curé followed him.

As Anne, pulling up her stockings, ran down again toward the water, she heard Henry Aspinwall's voice, somewhere in the darkness, near her, protesting in fluent French.

"Let me alone," he was shouting at someone who seemed to be blocking his path. "I tell you, I can't! I must get water—water!"

Anne caught the outline of a woman's figure, of a gray head and heaving shoulders.

"But, Monsieur," the woman was panting, "what good is water? But my cow! For God's sake, Monsieur, save my cow! Without her we cannot live through the winter. Hear her! In the little barn back of the house! And my pig!" Her voice rose in a sudden wail. "Oh, my pig!"

But Henry tore himself loose and ran toward the next house, the roof of which had just burst into flames.

The woman shook her fists at him.

"Sales étrangers!" she shrieked. "They make themselves amusement in playing with water—and my cow burns! Ah, my God, and my pig, also!"

To Anne it all seemed like some evil dream. At first, the fire had been exciting—had been fun. It had seemed so easy to put out. The idea that it could not be checked had not entered her head. But now——

One by one the low wooden houses had caught, and the wind from the Laurentian hills was carrying the flames straight down the narrow village street. The Randolphs' own house, their new summer cottage must soon go also. The Aspinwalls and some of the other Canadian summer people had built higher up on the hill, but Mrs. Randolph had wanted to be near the river.

Abruptly, Anne realized what it would mean to her if everything that lay around her room in the cottage were destroyed. All her summer dresses—her hats. Good Heavens, even her golf clubs and her fishing rods! Would anyone have sense enough to save her rods and her clubs? They were in the little closet under the stairs. Without realizing what she was doing, she dropped her bucket and started off down the village street.

As she ran, she watched the fire. Now there were only three tiny houses between the flames and the little church. And just beyond the church was the short road that turned into the Randolph place. She dashed up it.

Then, just before she reached the foot of the veranda steps, she fell over something in the darkness and went sprawling. A lantern flashed in her eyes. She heard a woman's quiet voice, speaking in French, while a strong arm helped her to her feet.

"Mademoiselle is not hurt? Ah, thank God. Do not be afraid. You fell over the instruments for the golf. I am carrying them all to a safe place—behind the house—up on the hill where the fire cannot come."

"But what are my clubs doing here, Corinne?" Anne panted.

It was good to find someone beside the Curé who was not terrified and confused. Besides, Anne had grown to like Corinne Gagnon, who was waitress and maid and a person of "general utility" all in one, in the Randolph summer household. Corinne shrugged her shoulders.

"Madame, your mother, she becomes very much excited. The other young ladies also. They throw out everything from the windows. But here on the front lawn, even, the fire may come soon. So now I carry everything away to the back. But," she added with a sigh, "we do not push the piano out of the window. Even Eli Martel could not do that. And also we have lost the ice cream for the 'Sucre Party.' C'est de valeur, ça!"

Followed by Corinne, with the golf clubs, Anne ran up the veranda steps and into the house. The lamps—the oil lamps—were all burning, still. (At Cap à l'Ours there was neither gas nor electricity in those days.) But the house itself was empty. Part of the furniture was gone. Anne hurried up into her own room. It was in great disorder. The drawers of the bureau were lying on the bed; but they were empty, so was the closet. On the wash stand she saw her tooth brush, and thrust it into her pocket. Then down the back stairs she hurried, into the kitchen. There was nothing of value there, anyway. It looked just as usual. In the sink lay a deep pan filled with greasy water. Anne thrust her hand into it, hoping to wash off some of the dirt. Her fingers touched a heap of hard things at the bottom of the dish pan, and she drew out one of her mother's silver forks. Heavens, all the Randolph table silver had been forgotten, unwashed, in the kitchen sink! She poured off the greasy water, and with the heavy dish pan in her hands and her rescued tooth brush in her pocket, she ran out of the kitchen door, into the darkness. About fifty yards up the hill, several lanterns were swinging in the wind, sending occasional shafts of light over a mass of household plunder piled up on the grass. Anne hurried toward the lights.

"Has it begun to burn? Has it begun to burn?" cried a trembling voice from the darkness.

"No, Mother, not yet," Anne answered, tripping over a chair and almost falling at her mother's feet.

Mrs. Randolph was sitting, as majestically as possible, on a pile of mattresses. She was doing her very best to maintain her poise in the midst of difficulties; trying to act as she felt that Mrs. Aspinwall, on whom she patterned herself, would act under similar circumstances. But her lips were trembling.

"You see, Anne," she burst out suddenly, "there is no insurance. Your father gave me money to pay the premium with some Canadian company—but I—I needed that money for the piano rent. So I didn't renew the policy. I knew," she added, appealingly, "I knew how important it was for you to have a piano. The young people won't come around to sing in the evening unless you have one. And no one has ever had a piano up here before. I explained to Mrs. Aspinwall—that——"

Anne had found her mother's hand and pressed it. She understood. But her mother did not understand that Anne was not interested very deeply in Henry Aspinwall.

"Look, Mother," said Anne, abruptly. "What a wonderful sight! Come up here by me. You can see down across the village street. There's another house going up—the second from the church. We're in for it too, I'm afraid."

"Unless the wind changes," said a voice behind them. "I pray now for that."

Anne looked over her shoulder. Corinne was on her knees on the damp grass, and Anne heard the soft click of the beads as her rosary slipped through her fingers.

Anne's youngest sister, Mary, a child of eight, was lying on a mattress, near Corinne, fast asleep, exhausted by the excitement. The other sister, Eleanor, a few years older, was clinging to Corinne's skirts, staring with fascinated eyes at the fire in the street below.

"Do look, Mother," said Anne, again. "You might as well get something for your money."

Anne never forgot that picture of the burning village street. In the farthest distance, away to her left, lay a mass of shadow, shot through by one upright point of brightness—the white, tin spire of the parish church at Bonne Rivière. In her mind she could trace the road that ran beneath the dark trees from Bonne Rivière to the first houses of the village of Cap à l'Ours. This road flashed suddenly into view at a spot where each side of it was bordered by masses of deep-red embers. One bed of red embers after another, ending in a great cloud of smoke shot through with darting flames. And all this beneath a perfectly cloudless sky, while the stars were reflected in the broad breast of the St. Lawrence, so wide here that one could scarcely ever see the farther shore. The great, slowly moving stream of water bounded the whole flaming, smoky picture on its farthest side. Water! Water enough to quench an entire blazing village as though it were but a spark of smoking tinder. And yet, so far away! So unapproachable! So useless!

"It's getting nearer, Anne," whispered Eleanor, tugging at her sister's dress.

"Never mind, dear, it can't be much longer now."

Anne was trying to give what comfort she could. "The church must catch soon. That house next to it has begun to smoke."

Then, as she watched, she became slowly conscious of a change. The flames had been moving straight down the village street—reaching out from one house to another—always pointing—pointing in the direction of the church and the Randolph cottage. A moment ago the smoke that was pouring from the house next to it had hidden the little church itself from her eyes. Now its outlines were visible again! There was no smoke around it! The smoke from the next house was going straight up in the air! A moment's hush. Could it be true? The wind had dropped.

But the next moment came another strong puff.

"What rotten luck! Here the wind comes again!" And it did come, with redoubled strength.

Yet a glance down into the street below showed her that the picture had changed again. The church was more clearly outlined. The smoke from the nearest house was being driven back. The oncoming flames came on no longer. They were pointing now—not down the street—not toward the Randolph cottage; they were blowing straight out toward the St. Lawrence, and there were no houses at all on that side of the street, the side nearest the river.

Still Anne could not believe it. She put her grimy finger in her mouth and then held it up in the air. It was true. The wind had changed.

Behind her she heard Corinne getting to her feet. She turned, to see the girl staggering down toward the cottage, bearing two heavy mattresses.

"Where are you going, Corinne?" Mrs. Randolph's voice was sharp and frightened.

"I think I better get the two young ladies' beds fixed up, Madame," Corinne answered, as calmly as if fires were ordinary incidents of her daily life. "No fire comes here now. The wind don't change any more tonight. You see," she added, as simply as if she were saying "Madame est servie," "it was not the will of God that this house should burn."

Anne walked slowly after her. Automatically, she had picked up the Randolph silver out of the greasy dish pan, and now she began to search for her golf clubs.

"What luck!" she murmured to herself. "What colossal luck!"

Now that the strain was over, she found herself tense and shaken. Her mother's chatter—for the cessation of danger had unloosened her repressed love of speech—got on Anne's nerves. Following Corinne, she went through the house, down the veranda steps to the front gate, that gave on the village street. Farther up the street she could see dark figures moving to and fro among the piles of burning ashes. But the flames had already begun to die down. What a view of it she had had, up there on the hill! Robin and Henry could have seen nothing of all that. She felt a sudden desire to talk to someone.

Two men came out of the shadows. She recognized her brother's figure, at once.

"Robin, is that you?" she called.

The smaller figure, beside her brother, spoke eagerly, in French.

"It is I, Mademoiselle, Amyas Dufour. Monsieur, your brother, he is so near the fire for so long that now his eyes hurt and he does not see. So I—I bring him home."

Anne slipped her arm through her brother's. She peered into his face.

"It's all right, Anne," he said. "Don't let the boy frighten you. My eyes do hurt. But I can see right enough. Only—only I've seen——"

"Don't talk about it now. I know just how you feel. I saw it all myself from up there on the hill. I heard the hush just before the wind changed. I heard it change, almost. Wasn't it luck!"

"Luck!" her brother repeated. "I wish I thought so. If only I could think so. But I can't—I can't——"

Then, turning suddenly toward his sister, he pushed his head close up to her face. In the shadow, Amyas watched them. He did not understand what they said, but he had begun to take an intense personal interest in these two mysterious people; in the girl, because he caddied for her; in her brother, because he had watched him this past night trying to save the property of other people—of Amyas' people. Besides, the *étrangers,* the summer strangers, always interested him, somehow.

"You say that you saw it, Anne!" Robin was stammering. "But you didn't see anything at all. Not up there on the hill. Let me tell you—I'll never forget it—never! You know how hard we worked to hold up the fire? And how it just laughed at us, licked up the water that we passed up in buckets from the river, and then just went on its own way? Nothing that *we* could do stopped it—not for a minute. And not one of those darned Canadians tried to stop it, either. At least they didn't seem to be trying. And so it came on and on, nearer to our house every minute. Well, it had got to the second house from the church. That had begun to flame; and the next house to smoke. People were crowded all round the church. It was lighted up inside, and other people, mostly women—but a lot of men, too—were praying there. Above the roar of the flame you could just hear the murmur of their voices. It seemed such a silly thing to be doing, with the fire only one house away. And then—I gave up. It was no use trying to stop that wall of fire. I just stood there, opposite the little church, and wondered how the people would get out of it in time, when it started to burn. Then I noticed the people come streaming out. Not as if they were running away from the fire, but just quietly, naturally, as if there wasn't anything wrong at all. They knelt down on either side of the little board walk. And then out from the church came the priest—the Curé—the one you like so much, Anne. He had a white surplice on, and a stole. Just like the Rector at our school. But in his hands he held a sort of shiny thing—with rays coming out at the sides—and in the center something white. Through those lines of kneeling people, he walked down to the village street. Then he just stood there. There was a white sort of shawl over his shoulders, that covered his hands. And he lifted up the thing that he carried, and made the sign of the cross with it. I kept thinking how silly it all was; and how he would have to pick up his skirts and run soon, with the flames so near. But then—then—all at once, I noticed that the flames didn't snap and crackle so loudly. Things got quiet for a second. I don't know how to express it——"

"I understand," Anne interposed, as her brother hesitated. "I felt it myself—up there on the hill. A sort of hush."

"That's right." The boy's excited voice went on. "And after that the wind came on again. Only it had changed. Now it was blowing at right angles—straight out toward the water. And I knew then that something had happened; something that I couldn't understand. It must have been luck, Anne! It couldn't have been anything else, could it? Say it was luck, Anne!"

Anne's arm was around her brother's neck; she was comforting him as she would a frightened child.

"Of course I'll say it, Robin," she said. "But what difference does it make?"

"What difference?" The boy's shoulders quivered under his sister's powerful brown hand. "Why, all the difference in the world! Don't you see? *We* couldn't do anything to stop the fire. And we laughed at the habitants because they wouldn't help us carry buckets of water from the river. And all the time they *were* doing something. Something that has made us, with our buckets, look like fools. Something that made the wind change. So, then, they must be right—while we're wrong! They must have got hold of something that we haven't got. And I want to know what it is! After this night's work I doubt if I want to go through life trying to put out forest fires with idiotic buckets of water. I want—I want——"

"Hush, dear, you're wrought up and tired out. Come up to the house. Oh, here's Henry."

Out of the shadows of the village street came Henry Aspinwall. His clothes were torn, his face burned, and he was soaked to the skin with St. Lawrence water.

"What's the matter, Anne?" he called. "Let's go up to our house and have a drink. God knows we all need it. What a night! And what a piece of luck!"

"Robin doesn't think it was luck," Anne said, and a moment afterward could have bitten out her tongue. For Henry laughed.

"I suppose he thinks that the habitants stopped the fire with their prayers and all that silly monkey business in front of the church. Oh, I saw it. Why, the wind had begun to change long before the Curé began his little bit of magic. Only he'll cash in on it. You'll see. As long as this village lasts, people will believe that he and his saints stopped the fire. Well, it won't do them any harm, I imagine."

"You think it was just good luck, then, Henry?" asked Robin, beginning to feel ashamed of his outburst—Henry was always so manly, so self-restrained. Robin admired him.

"No such thing as luck, Robin," Henry answered, slipping his hand through the young boy's arm. "The wind changed because of the definite physical laws that govern atmospheric pressure. It would have changed at just that time, no matter what the good Curé and his flock had done. They couldn't have stopped it changing if they'd prayed for a year. Now come on and we'll have a drink."

"Bonsoir, Mademoiselle."

A voice from the shadow barely whispered the words. But Anne had a quick ear. She turned back for a moment.

"Oh, Amyas," she said, reaching out in the darkness toward the boy. "I had forgotten you were there. Thanks so much for all your help." Then, sensing somehow that the boy had something to say, she waited a moment.

"Mademoiselle Anne."

"Yes, Amyas, what is it?"

"Now that the Good God has not burned your house—you will—you will come back again next summer? I was afraid—not for the fire. But because——"

Anne patted the boy's thin shoulders. His words had made her suddenly conscious of something that had been lurking at the back of her own mind.

"Of course we'll come—house or no house—fire or no fire. You see, Amyas," she added, as though speaking to herself; "you see, I don't know what there is about this place—but I'll come back. I couldn't help myself. I'm beginning to love it here."

"Alors, à l'année prochaine, Mademoiselle."

"That's right, Amyas. We'll be leaving next week. À l'année prochaine!"

Long after her figure had disappeared in the shadows, as she strode on with long swinging steps up the road to the cottage, the boy stood motionless. Then, taking off his tattered cap, he made a strange, awkward little bow.

"Till next year is a long time," he muttered. "And the winter is longer still. She loves it here—but she does not know much about it. I do not love it—I." Then he waved his cap toward the Randolph cottage that was now lighted at every window. "Au revoir, Mademoiselle. À l'année prochaine!"

CHAPTER THREE

Pas Trop de Misère

IN those early days before Cap à l'Ours, or Bear Cape, came to be known among Americans as "a new place to spend the summer," and before these same *étrangers,* as the habitants called them, had begun to spend their money there, the winters were perilous times. Of what happened then, the summer visitor had no knowledge. And yet, when he came back each year and met on the dock the swarthy-faced man who had guided him into the woods the year before, or the thin, pinched-faced boy who had caddied for him on the new primitive links, he always asked the same question.

"Bonjour, Sylvestre. Avez-vous passé un bon hiver?" Have you had a good winter?

And the answer was always the same.

"Oh, pas si mal, Monsieur. Pas trop de misère."

Not too much wretchedness; not too much privation and hunger. That was the very best news that one could give. For when the snow came down on Cap à l'Ours and on Bonne Rivière, and when the side-wheeler steamboat from Quebec stopped running, then the villages were cut off completely from what we so often miscall civilization. It is true that once or twice a week the Post came from Quebec. But the Post was a sled drawn by a single horse; and that took two long days, in good weather, to reach Cap à l'Ours. It brought letters; but it could not bring supplies—groceries, things to eat.

In the two villages themselves, to be sure, there were small stores. And the owners often became the arbiters of life and death, for they kept on hand small supplies of groceries and of tinned stuff. And they gave credit. By the middle of winter the villagers had spent all their little ready money. Many of them counted the days, then, until the summer visitors came again, so that they might earn enough, by renting their houses, their calèches, or their horses, to pay off their debt to the storekeepers. They began every summer in debt; they could never save anything.

Early in the autumn, long after the last summer guest had gone, most of the villagers and all the farmers banked up the lower stories of their wooden houses with earth and fallen leaves. This lower story was hermetically sealed for the whole winter, and the family lived on the upper floor, every window of which was fastened tight and every crack or cranny stuffed with bits of old cloth. No breath of air from the outside ever got into those upper rooms for more than six months of the year.

Then the snow would pile up, obliterating the paths and the roads, covering the fences, so that those who went abroad, drove over the tops of the fences, straight across the fields. Branches of pine or *sapin* were stuck into the snow to show the driver where he might drive his sleigh without danger of falling into a ten-foot drift.

The older, stronger men sometimes went into the woods to a logging camp, where they spent months at a time. Boys carried supplies to them, pushing through the forest on their snow-shoes. There people had the best of it. They, at least, were out in the open air; and they had something to do.

But the little children and the women and the older men lived day after day in the emposted air of their sealed houses; the men with nothing to do except dig their way out to the little barn to feed the horses or the cow, and to watch the meager supply of fodder grow smaller and smaller as the months went on. That supply of hay often meant loss and ruin if it could not be made to last long enough. Should the winter prove two weeks longer than usual, during those last two weeks there would be nothing—absolutely nothing—for the cattle to eat. Many a farmer, while the snow still hung on, had to watch his cow and his horse starve to death before his eyes. Without them, how could he sell milk to the *étrangers* when they began to arrive in June? How could he earn enough money to pay his debt at the store except by renting his horse and his old calèche? And he had no money to buy another cow or another horse. He was in debt already.

People went hungry too in those winters. In some parts of French Canada, on the outlying farms, people go hungry still.

Among the summer visitors, the *étrangers,* there was once a young man who yearned to regenerate the world. He was deeply shocked by finding his caddie an undergrown urchin of eight, smoking a very black old pipe. And the boy was smoking the strong, dried tobacco leaf that the habitants grow in their own front yards. The young man snatched away the boy's pipe and read him a lecture on the evil results of smoking, asking him finally how it was possible that he, at such a tender age, had become addicted to this filthy vice. With a slight shrug of his thin little shoulders, the boy gave the young man a polite and a most illuminating answer.

"All the boys learn to smoke in the winter time, Monsieur," he said. "Quand on fume, on n'a pas si grand faim."

Smoking this vile, strong tobacco, then, was neither a vice nor a luxury to the boy. He had learned to smoke during the winter because "when you smoke, you don't feel so hungry."

But if the boys and older men were idle, the women were not. In those unaired rooms of theirs, in which, during the winter, a whole family slept and ate and did not wash, the women spun their own flax on old-fashioned spinning wheels, and they wove their own cloth, their homespun, on their old-fashioned looms. All winter long you could hear the click and the snap of the shuttle as they sped it to and fro, leaning over the loom to catch the last ray of winter sunlight. They did not waste much money on candles, or on oil for lamps. It was cheaper—and warmer—to go to bed as soon as it got dark outside.

The life of Monsieur le Curé of Bonne Rivière—the Reverend Gonzague Hervey—was not much easier during winter than the life of his people. His little Presbytère, close to the big, whitewashed parish church, did have a small iron stove in the living room, but except the kitchen, the rest of the house was freezing. Often he would have liked to sit in the kitchen with his aunt, who acted as his housekeeper. But this she would not permit. It was not fitting for Monsieur le Curé. The big church itself was not heated at all. When he said mass in the early winter mornings, his hands were often so cold that he could not even feel the sacred vessels. And on Sundays, when he had to fast for the high mass, and to preach also, he would come back to the Presbytère so thoroughly chilled that it seemed as though he would never, never get warm again. But far worse were the sudden journeys through the drifted snow to the bedside of some sick or dying person. Often he had to drive for hours in the almost trackless snow in order to reach some distant farmhouse, from which a terrified messenger had come with the news of sickness or death. Occasionally the priest would arrive almost frozen, with no sensation at all in the hands that he had tried to keep folded over his breast, where the Blessed Sacrament rested, only to find the sick man perfectly well again, apologetic, and only a little frightened still. But no messenger ever came to the Presbytère asking for the Curé who was not at once received, and into whose waiting sleigh the young priest would not bundle himself, as soon as he had fetched the Blessed Sacrament and the Sacred Oils from the church.

But life was hardest, coldest, the winter longest, in the tiny old wooden house just a few yards beyond the Presbytère; a house that was distinguished from the other dwellings by a wooden sign over the door, "Orphelinat Apostolique." For Monsieur le Curé had founded his orphanage. He had founded it three years ago, now, in the old house that had once belonged to the sacristan, or *bedeau,* of the parish church. The old *bedeau* who had lived there had died, and the new man had a good, substantial house of his own. Nobody claimed the old house, the old sacristan had had no family, no heirs; and the Curé had considered that the house had fallen into his hands directly in answer to his prayers.

In this house there now lived six small boys, the youngest five years old, the eldest, Amyas Dufour, eleven or twelve. The Dufour girl had been placed with the Gagnons, and Corinne, old Gagnon's eldest daughter, had taken a great interest in her. Orphan girls were always easy to place. But the boys—— Already the Curé had three other little orphan boys who needed care but he had no money to feed them.

One very cold morning in February, so cold, so still, so dry that you scarcely felt the cold at all, Monsieur le Curé got up from his breakfast in the Presbytère and put on his heavy winter coat.

"You did not eat all your egg," said his aunt, trying her best to remember that he was now a holy priest and no longer her mischievous little black-eyed nephew.

"I am sorry," said Monsieur le Curé, going back to the table and carefully scraping up the last congealed shreds of a fried egg. His early life on his father's little farm had taught him the wickedness of wasting food. "The truth is, I am worried."

"We should cast our cares upon the Sacred Heart of Our Lord," his aunt answered, folding her withered hands across an expanse of black apron. Then, fearing that she had presumed too far, she murmured, "But of course you know that better than I do."

"I have too little faith," said the young priest. "But first, there is always the orphanage to worry about. People have been kind, I know. Rochette has sent us some supplies from the store. And today I hear that Sister Onésime found a big sack of potatoes lying outside the door. She is sure that they were sent directly by Saint Anthony of Padua. For myself, I suspect Eli Martel. He must have been drinking though, to do good by stealth. If only he would keep away from that vile *estaminet!* He made money last summer. And the *étrangers* at Cap à l'Ours are paying him this winter to keep an eye on their cottages, to see that no one breaks into them. But he drinks it all up. And he isn't the only one. Besides, there are two new licensed places. Pascal Gérard has opened one, just outside Cap à l'Ours, at the top of the Quebec road."

His aunt was listening, anxiously. It was not often that this determined, tight-lipped nephew of hers opened his heart to her. And yet to whom could he talk? The nearest priest was twenty odd miles away at Baie St. Paul. In summer it was different. But in winter——

"The drinking worries me more than the orphanage," the Curé went on, turning with his hand on the knob of the front door toward his aunt. "It has increased every year. Before the *étrangers* came in the summer months, our people never had much ready money. Now it is so easy to sell trout or partridges to them, to rent a house or a horse. They keep the money till the winter comes; then, unless they go up to the "chantiers," the logging camps, they drink it all up; and their wives and children go hungry."

As he opened the door of the Presbytère, an icy blast swept through the little house. Its beams cracked.

"And yet," he added, as he closed the door behind him, "I do not much blame them. Whisky keeps out the cold. Go back, Aunt. You'll catch a rheumatism."

But the old dame knew Canadian cold and despised it.

"You could stop them drinking, if you wanted to," she shrilled, peering around the corner of the door at her nephew, who was pulling his heavy cap down over his ears. "Tell those four men who have licenses to sell whisky that you will excommunicate them unless they surrender the licenses of their own free will. And if they won't give them up, do what you've threatened. They're the only people who make money in the winter, except the storekeepers. They may love money. But they love the Good God more. Or at least—" she called after her nephew—"their wives do. No woman in these villages could bear to have an excommunicated husband."

The Curé put his head down against the cold wind and made his way along the path that had been cut in the drifts about the Presbytère. Sleighs were dashing along the road that passed just in front of the church. They had jingling bells, most of them, and the people in them waved and shouted to one another. As they passed the church, the men took off their hats or touched their caps; the women crossed themselves. The sun was bright on the snow; it did not feel so bitterly cold. After all, winter was not so terrible, sometimes. The priest hurried on down the road and turned in at a narrow path that led up to the door of the orphanage, his Orphelinat Apostolique.

Every time he looked at that sign above the door, he felt a warm sensation about his heart, a sense of pride, of confidence. People had warned him that his plan was impossible. He had not had a single penny that he could count on for his purpose. And yet, here it was, his orphanage. He had had difficulties. There had been a long correspondence with Monseigneur, the Bishop of Chicoutimi, who was now a very old man and who did not look favorably on anything new or unusual in his diocese. But the Curé had taken his own little savings and had, himself, journeyed to Chicoutimi. He had taken little Amyas Dufour with him. He had told the boy's story to Monseigneur. He had explained that Amyas was only one of many similar cases. And finally, he had secured a rather lukewarm permission to create the Good Work that lay so close to his heart. Once this permission had been granted, he knew where to look for help. A distant cousin who had entered religion was in a convent at Tadousac. To her he wrote, explaining his need, and the Mother Superior at Tadousac had sent him two nuns of the community, one an older woman, to act as Mother Superior of the orphanage, and the other, a younger professed sister. Then the carpenter and the mason at Bonne

Rivière had got the *bedeau's* old house into some habitable condition.

That was all three years ago. The beginnings had been achieved. But—but—how was he to keep the place going! If it failed—if it had to be given up—then Monseigneur at Chicoutimi would say, "I told you so," and there would be a black mark in his memory against Gonzague Hervey, Curé of Bonne Rivière.

The priest went up the rickety steps of the orphanage. As he did so, he could look into a low window on his right, into the little schoolroom. Five little heads were bent over five dilapidated desks, borrowed from the village school. The room was absolutely bare, except for a flaming chromo of the Sacred Heart just over the teacher's desk. Behind this desk sat little Sister Onésime, her thin, young face framed in the white of her coif, her brown habit enveloping her wholly.

Opening the front door, the Curé found himself facing another door, a new one of unpainted pine, in which there was a small wicket about the height of a man's head. He knocked—and he waited. Everything was done here in decency and in order, just as though it were some great and wealthy religious establishment. He waited patiently, because he knew that Sister Onésime, in order to come to the wicket, must first leave her orphans in the charge of Amyas Dufour. The Mother Superior herself could not answer his knock. That would be out of the question. In a few moments the little wicket was pushed back, and the priest caught just a glimpse behind it of the coif of little Sister Onésime.

"Bonjour, Monsieur le Curé."

"Bonjour, ma Sœur. Tout va bien?"

"Mais oui, certainement, Monsieur le Curé. Monsieur le Curé no doubt desires to see the Mother Superior. If he will go into the *parloir,* I will announce to the Reverend Mother the presence of our founder."

She bobbed a little curtsy and disappeared. The Curé turned to his left and entered a tiny little room that was cut into two smaller portions by a sort of lattice of rough pine extending from floor to ceiling. On the outer side of this lattice, he sat down. Almost at once he heard the rustle of a religious habit. And on the other side of the screen, the Mother Superior appeared.

Sister Marie de Jésu was one of those remarkable French Canadian women who seem to combine a genius for organization with an ability to understand and to manage children. In her family life, in the house of a well-to-do merchant at Quebec, she had found no outlet for her abilities. Yet she had entered religion from a sense of real vocation and had found herself happier there than she had ever dreamed possible. When she came to Bonne Rivière, she knew that she was being sent to undertake an almost impossible task. She knew that it must prove a life of hardship, perhaps of privation. But from her first meeting with the Curé, she had caught something of his enthusiasm, of his faith. And she had carried on during the past three years in the face of endless difficulties without a murmur and without a moment's doubt.

Now as she rustled into the *parloir* and took her seat close to the lattice, she could see that the priest was anxious about something. So she set herself to give him as cheerful an account of the orphanage as possible. She had a very pleasant, low-pitched voice, and her French was as meticulously perfect as that of any blue-blooded nun in the Sacré Cœur at Paris.

"But yes, Monsieur le Curé," she said, "but yes, we have great cause for thankfulness, first to the Good God and His saints, and then to you. The whooping-cough has disappeared at last. One hears an occasional whoop, it is true; but what is one whoop among half a dozen children? Last night, indeed, we were a bit anxious about this morning's breakfast. But we did wrong. Did not Sister Onésime find a bag of potatoes outside our door this morning? Our kind patron, Saint Anthony, has never failed us yet."

The Curé, however, could not be so easily reassured.

"So I had heard, Reverend Mother," he answered. "But one sack of potatoes does not last long. And I have not a penny of ready money left. I am ashamed to beg supplies from Monsieur Rochette at the store. He is tired of the Orphelinat. And I am at my wit's end. If I have brought these orphan children here only to starve them, only to make life harder rather than happier, then I have done a great wrong. Not to speak of Sister Onésime and yourself. Even the holiest religious must have food —if only occasionally." He tried to smile, but made a poor fist of it.

The Reverend Mother was uncomfortable. Any references to her own purely physical needs made her self-conscious; made her feel as if she were not a good religious, who should have no physical needs at all. So, deftly, she changed the subject.

"Your special protégé, Amyas, is better behaved these days," she began. "He no longer mopes and frets. Only yesterday I found him in prayer before our statue of Saint Anthony. I have thought, perhaps," she added, knowing well enough the Curé's own hopes for the boy, "that he might perhaps have a vocation."

The priest smiled, really smiled, for the first time that day.

"That is good news," he said. "From the first it has been my hope that some of our orphan boys might hear the voice of Almighty God in their hearts, calling them to the priesthood. And what was Amyas praying for, I wonder?"

Now this was a question for which the Mother Superior was not prepared. She did not want to answer it. But a good religious is truthful always. So she answered, rather slowly.

"Oh, well, Monsieur le Curé, one must not lay too much stress on a child's immature desires. Amyas *was* praying. And that means a great deal for him."

"Yes, but why? Did you ask him?"

The Mother Superior had asked. Now she wished that she had held her tongue.

"Mon Dieu, Monsieur le Curé, he was perhaps ashamed to tell me the real reason. He may be hiding the beginnings of his vocation. Boys are often shy in such matters. But he did say," she went on, looking down at her strong, capable hands, folded properly in her lap, "that he was asking Saint Anthony not to let him die before summer came again."

"Ah, yes; of course," said the Curé, half to himself. "He *was* then thinking of his vocation—but not a vocation to the priesthood, I fear. Have you ever watched him when he is alone in the woodyard behind this house?"

"Monsieur le Curé means what Amyas does with that stick that he has fashioned for himself? Moving it up and down in his hands as if he were striking at something on the ground—a mysterious game. But he plays at it alone, always."

The Curé looked up suddenly at his companion on the other side of the lattice. He was smiling broadly now, almost happily.

"The Reverend Mother has never watched the *étrangers* in summer, playing at this new game of theirs. I have. They have rented the whole lower pasture between Bonne Rivière and Cap à l'Ours.

They drive off the cows, and have made holes in the ground with little tin cups. The Seigneur gets a good rent now for all that waste land. By the way, I saw him yesterday, driving through the village. He looks very much broken. If he has another attack like that last one——"

He broke off abruptly, to stare at a small figure that stood just behind the Mother Superior. Following his eyes, she turned about.

"Amyas!" she began, in an icy tone of disapproval that was colder and sharper than the winter air outside. "Are you beside yourself? How dare you come into my portion of the *parloir* without my permission?" As the boy stood silent, staring up at her, she had a moment of uneasiness. "There is nothing wrong, is there? Sister Onésime is not——"

The boy shook his head. He had seen the little nun faint twice, from cold and lack of proper food, so he understood the question.

"What is it, my son?" interposed the Curé, peering through the lattice at the silent boy. Amyas' cheeks were flushed, his thin, brown hands were trembling, and in one of them was clutched something white.

"It is a letter," he stammered. Then, with a rush, the words began to tumble out of his mouth. "Between lessons—I asked Sister Onésime if I—if I might go to pray to Saint Anthony.—At his statue—you know, just near the front door—the door with the little window in it—that the sister looks out of when anyone knocks. So I knelt down there —and I was praying—Monsieur le Curé, I was indeed. And all of a sudden, I heard footsteps in the front hall—on the other side of the door. And someone knocked at the little window. I jumped up. I knew that I must call Sister Onésime—to open the little window. But—but while I was getting to my feet—I saw something white being pushed under the little window—where there is a crack, you know. One can look through it into the front hall. Once or twice—I have—I have looked through. It was wrong—but——"

"It most certainly was wrong, Amyas," said the Mother Superior. "You must be punished for that later.—But go on. What happened?"

The boy darted a sullen rebellious look at the Mother Superior. But he was too excited to sulk. He could do that by and by, while he was being punished.

"I stood there, Monsieur le Curé," he hurried on, turning his face toward the priest, as though appealing directly to him. "I saw that it was a letter. It was lying now on the little shelf under the window in the door. Outside I heard the steps going away. And I knew—I knew that Saint Anthony had brought the letter. I thought that perhaps it was for—for me. No one has ever written me a letter before. I was—I was so happy. So I picked it up. And first, I knelt down again, to thank the good saint—for bringing it. Had I not heard his footsteps in the hall, outside? And then—I looked at the letter." The boy's voice rose in a thin, disappointed little wail. "But it was not for me at all—not for me at all!"

"Then why dash in here with it?" demanded the nun. "Probably someone from the post office was passing and left it for us. The post from Quebec came in yesterday."

"Oh, no, Reverend Mother," said the boy. "Saint Anthony brought it. But it did not have my name on it. So I carried it to you right away. I knew it must be important. And perhaps," he added, wistfully, "it might have something in it—about—me. And even if there isn't anything—" he held out the letter as though he hated to give it up—"then maybe the Reverend Mother will let me have the stamp on the envelope. It is, you see," he muttered, pointing with a long, sensitive, and very dirty finger, "it is—an American stamp."

The Curé stood up and came close to the lattice, while the nun turned the letter over and over in her hands, without making any attempt to open it.

"I do not know the handwriting," she said to the impatient priest. "And it is addressed in a rather peculiar way. Simply to 'The Orphanage at Bonne Rivière, in the Province of Quebec.'" Then being a well-trained religious, she stifled all feeling of curiosity and thrust the letter through the bars of the lattice into the Curé's hands. "I think perhaps Monsieur le Curé had better open it."

And the Curé did so at once, tearing off one end of the envelope. He heard Amyas give a little cry of protest—Monsieur le Curé was spoiling the stamp!

But the Curé was paying no attention to so small a thing. He had opened a single sheet of letter paper, from which a colored oblong slip dropped to the ground.

After a moment, he thrust the letter back through the lattice. "Read," he said abruptly, and swooped down to pick up the colored slip of paper at his feet.

"But it is in English, Monsieur le Curé," protested the Mother Superior.

"I had forgotten. Kindly give it back, and I will translate." Then he looked at Amyas with a rather twisted, peculiar smile. "Listen, Amyas. You were right. There is something in the letter about you, after all."

"From Saint Anthony?" asked the boy, tense, expectant.

"Well, in a way. But not directly from him. Although—I don't know. God answers our prayers sometimes in unexpected ways. Now I will translate."

Slowly, haltingly, hesitating over the unfamiliar handwriting that was often so hard to read, the Curé translated the letter.

MIDDLETOWN, NEW YORK
January 28, 1900

TO THE MANAGERS OF THE ORPHANAGE AT BONNE RIVIÈRE
Dear Sirs,

I do not know exactly how to address you, and I hope that you will forgive me for writing in English. My French is not good enough for a letter. My family have spent several summers at Cap à l'Ours. We have a cottage there. Monsieur Hervey, the Curé, knows where it is. It came near being burned down last September. My brother Robin and I have both wanted to express our gratitude because our cottage was not burned, but we have not known what to do. My brother thinks that somehow God changed the wind so that our house did not catch fire. He wants to thank Him. Not the kind of God that we have been taught about, but your kind. This sounds foolish, I know. But that is what my brother says. So we decided to send a thank offering in money. But my mother does not like your church, I am sorry to say. She would not want us to give money to it.—Then I remembered Amyas Dufour and the orphanage. Mother couldn't object to us giving our money to an orphan asylum. So I am sending you a check for fifty dollars. Half of it comes from my Christmas money, and half from my brother's. We would both like to send our best wishes to Monsieur le Curé, if you see him occasionally. Wishing you all a Merry Christmas, although it is a little late for such greetings.

Sincerely yours,
Anne Bedell Randolph

Give my love to little Amyas.

The Curé balked somewhat at the postscript. He translated it "À le petit Amyas, mes salutations." And then he added, as if these words were also written on the page before him, "I hope that he is a good boy always and says his prayers." The opportunity for impressing the rebellious Amyas was too precious to be lost.

As he finished his halting translation, he held out the check to the Mother Superior.

"Fifty dollars!" she said in a hushed voice. "Fifty dollars! Why, it will take us through the rest of the winter. It will mean——"

The Curé stood up.

"The occasion is an unusual one, Reverend Mother," he said. And his voice was harsh as if his vocal cords functioned with difficulty. "I have been grievously lacking in faith. And I have been reproved by the faith of a boy. You and I—and Amyas, too—we will go together to the statue of Saint Anthony in the hall, and we will kneel down there to thank Our Lord for His mercies and Saint Anthony for his powerful intercession on our behalf. And tomorrow I will say mass for our two first American benefactors."

But as the priest left the *parloir* by one door and the Mother Superior by another, in order to meet in the hall beyond, Amyas hung back. He had caught sight of the empty envelope, left lying on the chair where the priest had sat on the farther side of the lattice. By stretching his thin arm through one of the interstices of this grille, he could just touch with his fingers the tip of the envelope. He spit on his fingers, reached out again, and this time, by stretching and straining, he managed to draw the bit of paper toward him. He gazed at the writing on it, and then thrust it inside his rough blue shirt.

"My Mademoiselle!" he muttered to himself, as he hurried off after the Mother Superior and the priest. "It was she. Not Saint Anthony at all. Did I not hear her footsteps in the hall outside, when she pushed her letter through the grating? Or maybe Saint Anthony gave her his escort as far as our front door. C'est de valeur, ça! Qui, c'est de valeur!"

He tiptoed through the hall and plumped down on his knees just beyond the outspread skirts of the Curé's cassock, on the little bit of well-scrubbed flooring that separated its black folds from the brown billowing habit of the Mother Superior.

And all this will explain why visitors to the Orphelinat Apostolique, even today, are always intrigued by an ancient, much-battered statue of Saint Anthony of Padua, the patron of all orphan children—a statue greatly out of keeping with the spick-and-span surroundings of the present new building—and which is said to be connected with two or perhaps three well-authenticated miracles. On the wooden base that supports it are inscribed in purple ink—much faded now—two American names:

ANNE BEDELL RANDOLPH
ROBIN HENDERSON RANDOLPH
Bienfaiteurs

CHAPTER FOUR

Greater Love Hath No Man

"HELLO, Anne, is that really you?"

Amid a heap of golf bags, fishing rods, and other less important luggage, Anne stood, and held out her hand to the man who was coming toward her along the side decks of a very ancient side-wheeler that was paddling at its leisure down the St. Lawrence on its way up the Saguenay River from Quebec.

"Hello, Henry! I never thought you'd be here so early in June! How's everyone at home? Last time I saw you we were singing '*Au revoir, mes amis, au revoir*' on the Cap à l'Ours dock, last September. Remember? Had a good winter?"

"So-so. I'm reading law in an office now. And I can't say that I like it very much. I wanted to get on the staff of some newspaper, you know, so that I could write. But Mother simply wouldn't hear of it."

Anne laid her hand on Henry's shoulder. On her part it was the natural gesture of an old friend. But Henry flushed and began to pick at his cravat.

"I'm so sorry, Henry," she said. "But no one can stop you writing if you really want to. Think of the lawyers who have written great books."

"Think of them yourself. Who were they? Come, now."

The girl laughed, and threw up both hands in the air.

"All right, I surrender. But just the same, I shall always hope that some day you'll write a book about French Canada, about Cap à l'Ours, and all the people there. Anyway, what a wonderful day it is for seeing the blessed old place again. Look! There's Baie St. Paul in the distance. We seem to be making quite decent time."

"Where are your people? Can I do anything for your mother? Or is Robin about?"

Anne moved her shoulders uneasily and turned her face away.

"No, thank you, Henry. Mother isn't here—she's coming up later." Then, with a sudden impulse, she turned toward her companion again. "We've known one another a long time, Henry, haven't we? It's four years, isn't it, since the Randolphs first descended on Cap à l'Ours—and made your mother frantic for fear we should pay too high prices to the butcher? Henry, what good times we have had! When anyone at home asks about Cap à l'Ours and wants to know what we do here that makes us love it so—you scarcely know what to answer, do you? We walk a lot—and we go on picnics—on the beach or up at the 'Trou.' We play a little golf. Sometimes we go into the woods for a couple of weeks and fish Comporté and Morin, or others of the lakes. And in the evenings we sit around, or sing songs, or dance, or make *sucre*. It doesn't sound very interesting, somehow, does it? And yet we do love it, don't we? And there isn't any other place anywhere that is lovelier, or where you are happier, is there?"

She turned her flushed face to her companion; but he was staring down at the deck.

"No," he said, after a few seconds; "there isn't any other place quite like it. And we have had good times these past four years. But—we're getting older now. Lots of new people are finding out about Cap à l'Ours. They're building new cottages all the time. Mother keeps talking of moving farther along the coast, beyond Bonne Rivière, to Baie St. Jean, where there are no Americans at all, and where the butcher has not been so hopelessly spoiled. But she won't go as long as we have our old cottage. But you haven't told me where your people are. Or why you're up here so early. I've had to come now or not at all, for I'll be wanted at the office in August."

There was something about Anne's love of outdoor life, something about the freshness, the cleanness of her mental atmosphere, that always reminded Henry of the "Huntress Diana, ever chaste and fair." And being in his heart more of a poet than a lawyer, he used to call her his "Artemis," the "Archer Queen," the "Mistress of the Echoing

Chase." He knew, too, how she disliked all sentimentality, all love-making. For a moment, now, he was puzzled by a fleeting gesture of self-consciousness in Anne as she moved uncomfortably and looked away.

"Mother's coming up in a few weeks," she said, abruptly. "I'm getting the house ready. You see—well, to put it plainly, she's going to present us with a new member of our family—and she's over forty." As Henry stared at her, Anne went on hurriedly, "Father is both terrified and flattered. He goes around the house sort of slapping himself on the chest. And Mother's as full of whims as a dancing bear. I begged her to stay at home, and go to a hospital when the time came. But not she. No decent mother of a family goes to a lying-in hospital, she says. Perhaps they will go some day; but she herself is not 'advanced' enough for that. And she's determined to have the interesting event take place here at Cap à l'Ours. In her own strange way she's as mad about the place as we are. She has talked to me a lot. She never had any trouble in ushering us four into the world, and so she anticipates no trouble now. But I'm not so easy in my mind, Henry. I ought not to talk to you like this—but you've always been a sort of second brother. And I do want to talk to someone. Robin—he's been loafing more than studying at Princeton this year, and he'll have to tutor this summer; so he won't be of much help to me. He's down in the barroom now, drinking with some classmate of his that he met on the boat at Quebec."

"Of course you can talk to me about anything." Henry tried to produce a brotherly smile, but it was not a great success. "What are you so uneasy about? I do think it rather hard on you, though. You'll have to do all the housekeeping this summer, I suppose. That won't leave you much time for—for walks and picnics at Saint Agnès." He bit his lip, hurt by a sudden memory of the last time he had driven Anne home from Saint Agnès, in the moonlight; the time he had wanted so intensely to tell her something, and she had kept holding him off, changing the subject, until the houses of Cap à l'Ours came in sight and it was too late.

"Oh, I don't mind that. I shall have Corinne to help me, as usual. But I shall need another maid besides her. Since she married Eli Martel and has a little house of her own at Bonne Rivière, she won't live in the cottage with us any more. She has a baby of her own already. I don't see how she manages to run her own domestic establishment and cook for us all summer besides. But what good would she be to me if anything went wrong with Mother! You know how far off we are from good doctors. Old Doctor Lapointe, in the lower village, is a dear and kind old man, but I can't exactly see Mother submitting to his ministrations. And remember she's not so young and so strong as she was when Mary was born, ten years ago. I spoke to

Father about it. But he's so idiotically mid-Victorian. He thinks that having a baby is as simple as having a cold. Besides, he's only with us for two weeks in the summer."

Above their heads sounded the roaring bellow of the boat's ancient whistle.

"Look, Henry," cried the girl, jumping to her feet. "See, there, far ahead of us, is the long point of Cap à l'Ours. We ought to get there in another hour. How glad I am to see it again!"

Henry Aspinwall joined her at the rail of the old steamboat, that went swaying and puffing and tooting on its way. The wind blew in their faces and flung a strand of Anne's brown hair across his cheek. All winter long he had thought of her. And now they were to be together again in the place that they both loved so deeply.

"Maybe it won't be so bad, Anne—I hate to have you worry. Anyway, Doctor MacPherson of Ottawa, who is a friend of my mother's, is to be with us most of the summer. You remember his son, I'm sure. The old man isn't practicing any more, but he used to be a big gun in his profession. He'll keep an eye on your mother, I know. Especially"—he added, softly—"especially, Anne, if you were to ask him yourself."

But Anne did not seem to hear. Her eyes were fixed on a long green promontory that stretched far out into the great river, and that was now coming nearer and nearer, until one could catch the reflection of the sun from the windows of scattered houses.

"I wonder how we'll find our old friends," she broke out, slipping her hand through her companion's arm. "It's always so exciting, coming back like this. I'd like to wager that Pascal Ferron has drunk up every dollar of what he got from me last summer for the rent of his little mare. And if Corinne has managed to keep her money away from Eli, I'll be surprised."

"The drinking is getting worse and worse," Henry answered. "I can't blame the men, though. The winter must be a rotten time. But it's hard on the women and children."

Henry longed to put his hand over the strong brown fingers that rested on his sleeve. But he did not dare. He knew how she hated to "be touched." In silence they watched the distant green point. Now, as the boat swung out in order to pass around it, they got a glimpse of the shore beyond.

"There's the dock," Anne cried. The whistle above their heads roared again. "We'll be in soon. Do go down to the bar, Henry, and collect that brother of mine."

Half an hour later, Anne, laden with golf bags and followed by Henry and her brother Robin—who looked rather flushed and sleepy—went hurrying down the gangplank, and up the long incline to the top of the dock. Calèches and other carriages were standing there. Anne looked around eagerly.

"There's your carter, Henry," she called, and held out her hand. "Good-by. Don't wait for us. I'll find Eli in a minute."

Henry moved off, somewhat unwillingly.

Someone tugged softly at Anne's skirt.

"Why, Amyas," she cried, shaking hands with an overgrown boy of fourteen, who held a much-darned cap in one hand and a broken whip in the other. "How you've grown! Vous avez eu un bon hiver?"

"Ah, oui, Mademoiselle. Il n'y avait pas trop de misère."

"But where is Eli?"

"Over there, Mademoiselle. He has a new horse. It does not stand well. He could not leave it. Please let me take the bags."

Anne and Robin made their way through the little crowd. Almost at every step they had to stop to shake hands and ask the same question and receive the same answer. Eli hurried forward from beside his new calèche. Anne was rather surprised at his appearance. He looked better dressed than usual. And that new calèche! The new horse! But his sharp features seemed harder, more evil-tempered than ever. He began to pile the bags into the calèche.

Suddenly, a voice beside Anne exclaimed:

"Ah, Mademoiselle, but I am happy to see you again."

Anne dropped her fishing rods and faced about.

"Oh, Monsieur le Curé," she cried, holding out both her hands. "How glad I am to be here again! Have you had a good winter?"

"Not so bad, Mademoiselle," the priest answered. "Pas trop de misère."

Then as Anne hesitated, embarrassed by a new look of age and strain in the Curé's face, he went on, with a gesture to Amyas who was helping with the luggage:

"You and your brother and all your belongings can never get up the hill from the dock in Eli's calèche, even with his new horse. If Mademoiselle will permit, her brother and the bags can go with Eli, and Amyas will drive Mademoiselle in my little trap."

Anne accepted without hesitation. She wanted to speak to the Curé. She wanted to know what had happened during the past winter that had so hardened his eyes and furrowed his gaunt face. He looked ten—twenty years older. But she was to be disappointed, for the priest did not get in beside her. As soon as she was comfortably settled on the one seat of the little *planche,* or buckboard, and Amyas had jumped in also, the Curé raised his hat.

"Amyas will come back for me, here. Au revoir, Mademoiselle. Some day you must come and see the Orphelinat."

As the Curé's thin horse tugged the wagon up the long hill that leads from the dock into the village of Cap à l'Ours, Anne kept silence, turning her head from side to side, on the lookout for all the familiar landmarks. But she had soon reviewed them, one by one. Then she turned to Amyas, who was sitting very straight, very full of pride, clucking joyously to the Curé's horse.

"Amyas," she asked, unable to master her curiosity any longer, "what is the matter with Monsieur le Curé? He looks ten years older."

Amyas became communicative at once. About himself and his intimate emotions, he could not speak a word. But about other people, he was happily loquacious.

"I believe you, Mademoiselle. That is because last winter was ten years long. It seemed so. But now everything is all right. Nobody is excommunicated any more."

"Excommunicated, Amyas? What do you mean? Tell me about it. From the very beginning."

Amyas flapped the reins lazily on the horse's back, and stuck his whip in the socket. It was a twenty-minute drive from the dock to the Randolph cottage; he would make it last as long as possible. Monsieur le Curé, on the dock, he could wait.

"It was the drink, Mademoiselle—the bars, the *estaminets,* where the men spent all their money. There was one—the worst one—up on the Quebec road. And there the men would drink and drink at night. And in the darkness they would race their horses in their calèches down the steep hill, shouting, and making much disturbance. Then the horse of Pascal Ferron fell; Pascal was thrown out and broke his leg. He could not go into the logging camp; his wife and children had no money. It was a *grande misère!* And there were other wives, too, worse off still. So one Sunday, at the high mass—I being an acolyte heard every word—Monsieur le Curé does not preach a sermon at all. He tells about the drinking. And he says that if the four men who own the four drinking places do not give up their licences and bring them to him to burn, then they will be excommunicated. If they sin—and were they not in mortal sin all the time?—he will give them no absolution. Then they cannot make their communions any more. Their babies will not be baptized. Their houses and their fields will not be blessed. And if they get sick, no one will come to anoint them with the holy oils. AND, if they die, then they die without the priest—without le Bon Dieu—and they will go, without doubt—not to even the hardest purgatory—but straight to hell. And the Curé says also that if these men do not give up their licences and if they are excommunicated, then anyone who goes near them, or buys anything from them, or sells them anything, will be committing mortal sin—so bad a mortal sin that Monsieur le Curé thinks that he himself cannot absolve from it. That people with so bad a sin must go to Monseigneur the Bishop for absolution, at Chicoutimi. And, Mademoiselle," the boy added, slyly, with a satisfied smile, "it is a long way to Chicoutimi. In the winter you cannot get there at all. And if you cannot get there, to get absolution for this so wicked a sin from Monseigneur—then how can you make your Easter Communion? And people who do not make their Easter Duty, Mademoiselle—we do not like people like that at Bonne Rivière."

Anne listened, fascinated, visualizing with her quick imagination the conflict between all the powers of evil, represented by the owners of the four *estaminets,* and one determined young man—determined to save his people from ruin in spite of themselves.

"That was a brave thing to do, Amyas."

"It was, maybe, a foolish thing," the boy went on. "Sometimes I have listened at the door of the *parloir* in the Orphelinat, and I hear Monsieur le Curé and the Mother Superior talking together. He says that he might be sent away from the parish. If he excommunicates the four men, and if they go to Monseigneur at Chicoutimi and make a fuss and complain about the Curé who stirs up so much trouble about selling a little whisky, then maybe Monseigneur, who does not know the wife and the starving children of Pascal Ferron, will tell our Curé that he talks too much, that he must un-excommunicate those men, and himself perhaps go to some little parish, way off, where he will not make more trouble for Monseigneur for a long time. But—" again the boy looked up into Anne's face with a satisfied grin—"it is midwinter when Monsieur le

Curé tells those four men who sell whisky what he is going to do—and the snow and the roads to Chicoutimi are all blocked. And he says to our Mother Superior that she must pray that spring shall not come too soon this year. Well, it does not come early. Nobody gets to Chicoutimi. And when the snow does melt, then, in the stove of Monsieur le Curé four licences have long ago been burned. And the men who make a little money in the logging camps cannot spend it on whisky; so they buy food for their children. Eli Martel, he has a new horse."

"But it can't have been so easy as all that, Amyas," protested Anne. "What did those four men do when Monsieur le Curé threatened to excommunicate them?"

"Oh, they make at first very great trouble. They talk very much. But three of them, you see, Mademoiselle, have wives. And big children. And on Sundays, when a family comes to church, and if the father is not there, and if everybody else says, 'Do not go and speak to those people, their father has been excommunicated, and they are in mortal sin also because they live with him,' why the wife she cannot stand that very long. How shall she find out what is going on in the village if on Sunday none of the other women talk with her? Oh, no. The village men wanted whisky; but they did not want to go to hell for it. And the four owners of the bars —they loved money; but if they were excommunicated, there would soon not be many customers to buy what they had to sell. So Monsieur le Curé, he gives them ten days' grace. By the fifth day he had three licences in his stove. But he let those three men sell what whisky they already had. He would not rob them, you see. And for maybe three weeks there is some drinking. After that the whisky is all gone. Only one man—the man on the Quebec road—he makes trouble.

"Ah, it was funny. Mademoiselle, I wish you had been here to see! He, that man, has no wife, no children. Only a paid housekeeper. And he curses and swears and tells Monsieur le Curé to go ahead and excommunicate him. He does not care if he goes to hell. And Monsieur le Curé can go there too. So Monsieur le Curé, he says nothing; he just waits. All the very bad men in the village, those who do not care for hell or purgatory, they still go to get drunk up on the Quebec road. And they drive home, yelling down the hill, and two horses fall, and have to be shot. But no man is hurt. For that Monsieur le Curé thanks God."

The boy was becoming more and more excited as he reached the climax of his story. The Curé's horse had come to a dead stop, and was nibbling grass by the roadside. Amyas had forgotten it; so had Anne.

"Then, one night, Mademoiselle," the boy hurried on, his grayish-blue eyes sparkling with suppressed emotion; "—it was a very bad night—big wind—and much snow. Nobody out—and very, very cold. And on such a night—that man, the excommunicated one, in his little *estaminet* up on the Quebec road—he, Mademoiselle—he gets a very bad pain in his stomach." Amyas doubled over and twisted about as if in agony. "He takes a drink of his own whisky. But he is no better. He calls his housekeeper. But what can she do? And the man—with his bad pain—that gets worse every minute—he think he is going to die. Die? But he cannot die excommunicated. Before the pain, he did not care. But now he cares very, very much. The old housekeeper, he says, must fetch the priest from Bonne Rivière. But the night is too bad. She cannot go. At last she crawls out to Henri Hervey, who lives a little down the road. She begs him, for the love of God, to harness his horse and fetch the priest. His son is a friend of mine. I hear all about it afterwards. Henri, he says that for an excommunicated sinner who is going straight to hell, he will do nothing; but for the love of God, he will do a good deal.

"So through the snow and the wind, he gets to the Presbytère at Bonne Rivière; he wakes the Curé; and tells him to fetch le Bon Dieu from the Tabernacle in the church and to come at once. But Monsieur le Curé will not go. He sends Henri Hervey all the way back—up to the little *estaminet*—to the man with the bad pain in his stomach. And the pain is worse and worse. And Henri says to this man, 'Monsieur le Curé will not come. You are excommunicated.' 'Maybe,' cries the other; 'but I am dying, too.' And Henri tells him that the Curé will come if he shows true signs of repentance. If he will give Henri his licence and promise never to sell whisky again, then the Curé will come. And the man, in his great pain, he gives Henri the licence; in Henri's presence he makes the promise. He even gives Henri two dollars, that he may hurry back and fetch the Curé. So poor Henri drives back to Bonne Rivière. The Curé puts the licence in his stove; he takes le Bon Dieu from the Tabernacle; and gets into Henri's calèche.

"And then—while they are driving through the snow, up the Quebec road—the man's stomach-ache gets better. When they reach his house, he has no more pain at all any more. And he is very mad. But he has some sense of shame. He does not dare to be rude to Monsieur le Curé, because Monsieur le Curé carries le Bon Dieu on his breast, beneath his cloak. Only the man says that somehow he will get even with Monsieur le Curé because he has cheated him out of his licence and made him promise to sell no more whisky. Well, then, he will not *sell* it. He will *give it away*. And he will make every man in the place so drunk that the Curé will be sorry."

The boy stopped abruptly, and tugged the horse's head up from the grass. He reached for his whip.

"But, Amyas," protested Anne. "That is not the end."

"No, Mademoiselle, it is not the end. But I do not like to tell the end. It was the end that made Monsieur le Curé have so many lines and wrinkles. It was all the fault of that man on the Quebec road. He gave a party for all the men who would come; free drinks for everybody. And when they were very drunk, he made them do a foolish thing. They were sorry afterwards. But at the time they did not think; they were angry at Monsieur le Curé because very soon they would not be able to get a drink of whisky anywhere in Bonne Rivière. I saw them first, from the window of the Orphelinat. It was after midnight. I had been looking out at the moonlight, thinking about—" He checked himself suddenly. He could not tell his Mademoiselle that he had been thinking of her. "Thinking—about things—and I saw a lot of calèches coming very quietly down the road. Eight or ten of them; and filled with men.

"They stopped, and the men got out very quietly. And I saw that they were carrying something between them. My heart jumped into my mouth. It looked like a dead man. Then I saw that it was just clothes stuffed with straw. And over it they had pulled a *soutane*—a cassock—an old one that one of them had stolen from our sacristy. In front of the Presbytère is a little plot of ground with one tree in the middle. They walked through the snow to this tree. And there they put a rope over a limb, tied one end round the neck of their straw man, and hoisted him up. In the moonlight I could see that there was a white paper pinned to its chest. Then they took hands and danced around the tree. I opened the window where I was standing, and I could hear them laughing, and calling softly for Monsieur le Curé to come out and watch. I do not think that they ever intended that he should hear them and really come. They wanted him to find their image of him, next day, swinging to the tree, so that he would never know who had set it there. But they were all drunk, I think. And they made more noise than they thought; for all of a sudden, I looked toward the Presbytère, and there on the little balcony over the front door stood Monsieur le Curé, himself. He had a cloak thrown over his white night clothes. And the moon shone right down on his face.

"Then, in a moment of silence, he began to call the men by name, the men who were now huddled around the tree. 'Ah, Émile Desbiens, I see you there. Are you not ashamed of yourself? You will do penance for this yet. And Arthur Fourgette, what will your wife have to say to this? It is not enough to harm yourself by drinking, but you must try to outrage the Good God himself, in the person of his priest.' So, one by one, he called them by name. And one by one they all slunk off, leaving the image dangling there in the moonlight. A long time Monsieur le Curé stood, all alone up there on his balcony. And then I saw him put his hand to his head, as if it hurt him. He did not look angry any more; only very sad.

"So when he had gone in, I—you will never tell, will you, Mademoiselle—I slipped out of the window, down the water pipe, and across the snow. The men had all disappeared. I climbed up into the tree, I untied the rope, and pulled down that old cassock stuffed with straw. I was too angry to be scared much. I pulled out the straw. I wrapped up the cassock, so I could put it back next day in the sacristy. And the white paper that the men had pinned to its chest—the paper that said in big red printed letters 'The priest that sticks his nose in other people's business'—that I tore and tore into a hundred bits, and I buried them deep—deep in the snow. Then I got back into my room again. And I crept into the bed of little Thomas Gagnon. For I was very cold, Mademoiselle. Next day I was very sick. Doctor Lapointe, he came. So did Monsieur le Curé. But I do not remember their coming. When I was well again, and slipped into church to thank the Good God for being yet alive, I see Émile Desbiens making the Stations of the Cross. Twice he makes them. And up near the altar is Arthur Fourgette, saying his rosary. I watch him while he says all the beads—three times over. Imagine, Mademoiselle, all that on a week-day! And down by the front door I meet Madame Corinne Martel, with Eli, her husband. He had been one of those bad men too. And I hear her say to him, 'Animal unfortunate, must I bring thee here by the neck to pray for a short half hour before the statue of Saint Joseph? Thank the Good God that Monsieur le

Curé did not make thee to stand on thy head before the high altar. Make haste and pray. Must I be the only wife of your unblessed company whose husband is still an outcast from the sacraments?' So I knew, Mademoiselle, that the men who had done such great wrong to Monsieur le Curé and to the Good God were sorry, very sorry for what they had done—especially the married ones. But, Mademoiselle—" The boy hesitated for a moment. He was apparently intent on guiding the Cure's horse round the short turn from the village street into the road that led up to the Randolph cottage. "If those bad men do penance from now till the Day of Judgment, they will never take that sad look from Monsieur le Curé's eyes. Sister Onésime, at the Orphelinat, she talks to me sometimes because I am the oldest orphan. She says that Monsieur le Curé's heart is broken because he thinks that his people do not love him any more. But I—I love him, Mademoiselle. And you—" He just avoided a collision with a gate post—"you must help us to love him, too."

CHAPTER FIVE

Léontine

Anne had listened with breathless interest to Amyas' story. She had been scarcely half an hour among these people again, and already she was becoming absorbed in the atmosphere of their lives; fascinated, half puzzled, wholly charmed. It was indeed good to be back again.

At the top of her veranda steps, Corinne Martel was waiting for her. Anne noticed at once how pale, how tired, Corinne looked; but she set it all down to the *misère* of the preceding winter. She would see that Corinne had plenty of food, good food, and that she was not worked too hard during the summer. Had Anne been a little less virginal, a little more observant, she would have noticed something else about Corinne which at the time entirely escaped her.

The cottage looked so attractive. There was a fire burning on the big stone hearth of the living room. And there was a tea table, with a steaming kettle, set close to the cheerful blaze. The curtains were all up. Corinne had seen to everything.

Up-stairs she heard her brother's footsteps, stamping about in his bedroom.

"Tell Monsieur Robin that tea is waiting, Corinne," she said. "And oh, I'm so glad to be back! I can't thank you enough for opening the house and getting everything ready for us." Then she dropped into French. "Avez-vous eu un bon hiver?"

Corinne, who was piling logs on the fire—for it is still cold at Cap à l'Ours at the end of June—shrugged her shoulders just a little.

"Merci, Mademoiselle. Pas trop mal. Pas trop de misère."

Anne could imagine how much *misère* there had been with Eli, first drunk, then rebellious, and finally forced and shamed into public penance. But she could not bring herself to mention any of the things that Amyas had told her.

"You must take things easier this summer, Corinne," she said, impulsively, leaning forward to pat the other woman's shoulder. "Did you see about that other maid, that I wrote you about, in March?"

Corinne motioned to someone who was standing behind Anne, at the entrance to the living room.

"Come here, Léontine," she called. "Come and say bonjour to Mademoiselle Anne."

Across the floor of the living room came the trim little figure of a French Canadian girl, smoothing down her rebellious black hair. She walked easily, firmly, not swinging her hips, but moving like a boy. She was dark, but not swarthy like so many girls of her race; with a clean, velvety skin, a rather pert little nose, and full, firm lips. Her black eyes were sparkling with suppressed excitement. She made a clumsy little curtsy, and then stood before Anne, twisting and untwisting her stubby fingers.

"This is Léontine Dufour, Mademoiselle," said Corinne. "She is now seventeen years old. And she has been living in my father's house for the past four or five years. She does not know much about the ways of *les étrangers*. But she wishes to learn. And I will teach her."

Anne held out her hand—she had a "familiar" way with servants, of which her mother did not approve. Léontine, after a moment's hesitation, took the proffered hand and, suddenly, bent her head and kissed it.

"I will be good," she whispered, and then, in sudden confusion, faced about and dashed out of the room.

In the hall, outside, Anne heard a frightened squeal; then an embarrassed laugh. Robin came striding into the room, grinning, more than a little excited, and in high good humor with himself and the world. He had made haste to change his city clothes for the old pair of homespun knickerbockers and the very dilapidated moth-eaten sweater that he had worn every summer for the past four years. His mother had pleaded with him, she had even tried to steal these disreputable garments; but he had clung to them. They were his "fétiche"; they held memories of happy summers past; they would be harbingers of happy summers to come.

"Tea, Anne, please," he said, striding down the long room. "Just a whiff of this air gives me an appetite. Besides, I want to get the taste of that stuff I drank on the boat out of my mouth." He smiled at his sister, a rather sheepish grin, self-conscious, not quite sure of himself. "Who was the dusky beauty that I collided with in the hall just now?"

Anne, who was reaching for the teakettle, was about to answer; but before she could speak, Corinne interposed. She had caught the look of excited interest in Robin's eye.

"It is your mother's new servant, Monsieur Robin," she said in French. "Léontine Dufour. She is an orphan child. Her father and mother died from la grippe—both together—and Monsieur le Curé, he brought her down to Bonne Rivière. We took her into our family—to help out in the kitchen. And now I bring her here to help Mademoiselle Anne." Then after a moment's pause, she added with emphasis, "She is a good girl."

"Of course she is," Robin protested. He was annoyed. He understood well enough what Corinne was driving at. Women were always so suspicious. Why couldn't they leave well enough alone, instead of putting all sorts of thoughts into a man's head! "Just the same, she is unusual looking. I only had a glimpse of her, though. The minute she saw me, she gave a squeak like a frightened rabbit, and disappeared. Who was her father, anyway?"

Corinne knew that she ought to evade the question somehow. She did not want to stimulate interest in this new maid. In fact, she was not sure that she had done right in yielding to Léontine's persistent pleadings to allow her to work in the Randolphs' house this summer. Léontine wasn't easy to get along with. There were times when she was like a caged, rebellious animal. And yet it was so much easier to bring her than to take some other older girl from the village. Besides, Corinne's family and Eli, her husband, as well, had insisted on her taking Léontine; for the money—or most of the money that Léontine would earn—would go into the family treasury. And heaven knew that the Gagnons had supported this orphan girl long enough. So Corinne was in a quandary. She knew that she must keep Léontine in her place; but she must also keep the place for her, make her acceptable to her employers. Besides, Monsieur Robin had just asked her a question that she simply itched to answer.

"You never heard of her father, Monsieur Robin?" she asked, brushing the hearth clean of ashes, and starting to leave the room. "He lived at Grand Fond—you know—where you sometimes start into the big woods, when you go fishing. He was not a good man. He had—you know what I mean—he had a black heart."

"Oh," said Anne, with sudden interest. "Il avait le cœur noir."

"Mais oui, Mademoiselle," Corinne answered, hovering for an instant on the threshold of the living room. "Le cœur noir. But Léontine has a heart of gold. She has only a temper that is sometimes a little black."

When Corinne had gone, Robin stood in front of the big fireplace, smiling down at his sister.

"Just the same," he said, "she's one of the most remarkable-looking habitant girls that I've seen, black heart or no black heart!"

Anne looked straight up into her brother's eyes. His gaze wavered, while his cheeks flushed a little.

"For heaven's sake, Robin," she said, "don't let's start the summer all wrong. Remember, too, that we mustn't give Mother any extra ground for anxiety during these next few months. I don't want to be unkind, but I haven't forgotten the trouble you got into about the farmer's daughter, two years ago. You nearly had to leave school, didn't you? But I'm sorry I spoke of it. Only do be careful!"

Robin shuffled, and kicked sulkily at a loose brick of the fireplace.

"Oh, I'll be careful enough. I'm not a schoolboy any more. But I don't see why I shouldn't have a little fun. The girls I liked most last summer aren't going to be here this year. Oh, it's easy enough for you. You've always got Henry Aspinwall hanging around to amuse you and to——"

Anne burst out in a gasp of laughter.

"Henry!" she exclaimed. "Why, Henry's not like that, you old idiot. He's just a part of this delightful place—like the mountains—or the St. Lawrence. He's always here—and you can always depend on him."

"Maybe," said Robin, setting down his teacup, and fumbling in his pocket for his pipe, the pipe that he only smoked at Cap à l'Ours. "That's what you think about Henry. But I've got a hunch that Henry doesn't think that way about you. You're no river to him. You're something damn human—something that he wants—badly. I see it—Mother's crazy about it. But you——"

"Robin Randolph, stop talking like that!" Anne stood up so abruptly that she almost overset the tea table. "Please don't start to spoil my summer the very first minute. Go down to the village and see if Monsieur Jolicœur has opened his pharmacy yet. If he has, get me some tooth paste—I left mine on the boat. And remember—" she shook her finger at him, for she was too good-natured ever to be angry for more than a minute—"remember that Léontine may take after her father. She also may have 'le cœur noir.'"

"As long as it isn't a hard heart!" Robin answered, pulling an old iron club out of his golf bag and tucking it under his arm. "I'll be back for supper at seven. Oh, by the way, did you hear the news? Eli told it to me on the way up from the dock."

"You mean about Monsieur le Curé? Yes, Amyas told me."

"No, no. I didn't hear anything about him. I mean about the old Seigneur. The Laird of Mont Sainte Marie. He died last March. All alone in that big house. He was a Presbyterian, you know. There wasn't any Presbyterian parson on tap nearer than Montreal, so they had to bury him here, somewhere, without any service. Just stick him in the ground. I hear, though, that as soon as the summer people begin to arrive, there's going to be some kind of "post factum" funeral service in old Mr. Aspinwall's Union Chapel in the village. Ghastly place!"

"Oh, Robin, it isn't so bad. All the summer visitors who aren't Roman Catholics go there. They have Presbyterian service one Sunday and Church of England service the next, so that everybody can get what they want. If there's a funeral there for the old Seigneur, I'm going. He was always very kind to us. And to Father, too—even if Father did almost fall off the narrow bridge one Sunday afternoon after he had had too much of the old boy's Scotch. But who will be Seigneur now?

"I couldn't find out. Eli didn't seem to know much. The old house has been shut up. I think it goes to a cousin of the old Laird who's some kind of government official in Toronto or Ottawa. He's expected down here some time this summer."

"Oh, Robin, what fun that will be! He's probably a young man, who'll open the old house and let a little gaiety and happiness into it. Just think how interesting it would be if he gave parties on the big front lawn! I'm crazy to see the inside of that house. They say that no woman except the old Laird's housekeeper has set foot there in thirty years."

"And perhaps, perhaps—" Robin teased—"the new Seigneur is still single—and in Miss Anne Randolph he may find just the right woman to——"

He ducked his head to avoid the magazine that Anne hurled at his head, and went off whistling, down the steps of the veranda.

"Léontine Dufour!" said Anne to herself. "A common enough name. I wonder whether she is any relation to my little Amyas. I'll ask her."

She looked into the kitchen, but no one was there, so she went upstairs to unpack.

There was no one in the kitchen at that moment, because Corinne was talking very seriously to Léontine in the little clump of fir trees back of the cottage. Léontine was sullen; Corinne was flushed and very stern.

"Now I have warned you," the elder girl was saying. "Be careful. And oh, Léontine—" her severity disappeared, and she put both hands on the other girl's shoulders—"do not make things any harder for me. How it is with me now, I have told you. I begged Eli to let me stay at home this summer. But he would not hear of it. He needs the money that I earn here for the winter, he said. And he says that Mademoiselle is so dumb that she will notice nothing. But I do not fear her; she is kind. I do fear Madame, her mother—except that she also—Well, then, do not make things more hard. I have a fear of this summer. I cannot say why. So help me, Léontine, help me."

Léontine threw her arms about Corinne's neck. She did not cry; no one had ever seen her cry yet. But the lines of her young face were set in grim determination that made her look strangely stern and old.

"Never mind, Corinne," she whispered. "I will not roll my eyes even once at him. When I pass him the potatoes, I will not once breathe even a little softly down his neck. You shall be satisfied with me. Indeed you shall. Nevertheless," she added, half to herself, "he is very handsome. Two years ago when I used to watch him pass our house, his legs were too thin, and he did not know anything about women. He drinks too much. And he is not very kind to his sister. I think if maybe I see him close to, and often, in this house, all summer—I shall find him as ugly as Stanislaus Morel, the drummer from Quebec, whom I once thought of such great charm. Come, we will remember that we are servants—and forget that we are girls!"

They hurried into the house, arm in arm.

CHAPTER SIX

Charity at Bonne Rivière!

"My compliments, Mademoiselle Anne," said Monsieur le Curé. "I should never have thought it possible. But you have a way of your own with children."

He was standing close to Anne Randolph in the wings of a tiny stage that had been erected in the largest room of the schoolhouse at Bonne Rivière. To his right, beyond the line of the drawn curtain, he could hear the murmur of the audience. All the important people from Cap à l'Ours, mingled with most of the members of his own parish, were sitting there to see the series of tableaux from the "Lives of the Saints" that Mademoiselle Randolph had arranged for the benefit of the Orphelinat Apostolique. An old idea for an afternoon's entertainment, perhaps; but it had attracted people because the actors were the orphans themselves.

Anne had just finished posing a tableau of Saint Martin sharing his cloak with the beggar. Little Aristide Thybaud, very proud and stiff in silver pasteboard armor, was holding a wooden sword thrust through a red cloth, while on the ground squatted Thomas Blackburn, dressed in a wig of white cotton and very little else. Sister Onésime had protested to Anne that "even for a beggar he was very naked."

The curtain was drawn aside. Anne beckoned over her shoulder.

"Go on now, Amyas. Wait a minute. Your left wing is crooked."

And Amyas Dufour, the oldest and biggest of the orphan boys, advanced to one side of the stage. He was gorgeously appareled in a breastplate of gold tinsel over a white tunic; and he had wings, for he was the Archangel Michael. It was he who explained each tableau, in short, rhymed couplets that Robin Randolph had written, and that had been done into French by Mademoiselle Goderau, who kept the Religious Lending Library, where one bought *Objets de Piété,* rosaries, and statues, and books of devotion. Amyas had a clear, fresh voice. His well-shaped head, with its clean-cut features, gray-blue eyes, and dark-brown wavy hair stood out with unexpected beauty above the white and gold of his costume.

"I'm so glad that I had sense enough not to let him wear a wig," whispered Anne to the Curé, as the curtains came together amid great applause from the audience. "Now for the next picture. Saint Francis preaching to the birds. It's little Johnnie Carré, and I'm afraid that when he sees the audience, he'll begin to suck his finger instead of holding up his hand in benediction."

Johnnie Carré did forget his pose; he did suck his finger, staring out at the audience in amazement. But no one minded. Indeed, Johnnie had more applause than the others.

But it was the final tableau that roused the greatest enthusiasm. "The Mother of all Saints," it was called. Anne's younger sister, Eleanor, all in white, with a great blue mantle, sat enthroned, with an orphan "angel" on either side. Two other "angels" held her blue cloak spread out, and beneath the shadow of it were gathered all the saints that had already been pictured: Saint Martin, Saint Francis, Saint Anthony of Padua, and the others, while the Archangel Michael kept guard with drawn sword at Our Lady's right hand.

Amid enthusiastic murmurs from the audience, the curtains closed, only to be opened again, as the applause died. Anne looked anxiously out from the wings, where she stood hidden. For there was to be a last touch that was all her own. She hoped that it would go right. But with such small children, you never could tell.

While the children on the stage held their poses, up from among the audience, at the back of the hall, came the two smallest boys in the orphanage. They were dressed in their every-day clothes, with the bright red ties that all the orphans wore. Hand in hand they came up the aisle, very frightened, but with their eyes fixed on the group of saints gathered beneath Our Lady's blue mantle. They stumbled a little as they climbed the three steep steps to the middle of the stage just in front of the central figure of the tableau. They stood there, tongue-tied, staring at all the glory spread before them.

"Mais, parlez donc—parlez—petits imbéciles!" whispered the Archangel Michael, from his place beside the throne.

The two little boys loosened the hand clasp with which they had clung so closely together. Each made a funny little nodding bow to the Mother of all Saints.

"Ave Maria," they said, in piping trebles, "ora pro nobis!"

And then they turned around, placidly, and stared at the audience.

"À genoux—à genoux," whispered Sister Onésime from the wings.

Obediently, the two turned their backs to the audience and plumped down on their knees. But as they plumped, the smaller boy lost his balance, caught wildly at his companion's shoulder, and together they rolled over in a struggling tangle of small arms and legs. Quickly the curtain was drawn and Sister Onésime dashed on to the stage to separate the two small actors, who were by this time kicking and thumping each other at the very feet of the Queen of Heaven.

The tableaux were over. A few moments later, Anne was beset on all sides by congratulations, both in French and English.

"But it wasn't my idea at all," she kept saying, pushing her way to the back of the hall, where Robin Randolph and Henry Aspinwall were standing. "My brother worked it all out. He wrote it. I only made the costumes."

"Only!" laughed Robin, as old Madame Despines from Quebec, who had just built a cottage at Cap à l'Ours called "Mon Désir," bore down upon him. "My sister, Madame, is always like that. She pretends that she does nothing. And yet there is really nothing that she does not do."

The little hall was filled with chattering, moving people. Along the walls, booths had been built; for Anne's tableaux were only part of the Bazaar that was being held at Bonne Rivière for the benefit of the Orphelinat. It was still early, not later than five o'clock. The Bazaar would be open until eleven. But Anne was tired. She wanted to go home.

"But you must stay and have some tea," persisted Madame Despines. "The French ladies of Cap à l'Ours have arranged a little restaurant. Let me at least show it to you, Mademoiselle Randolph. My own chef has been working for the past three days on a superb *gélatine* of ham and a boned turkey. These are my contributions."

Anne could not refuse. At least she must take a look at the gélatine of ham and the boned turkey; for Madame Despines, who gave the best dinners at

Cap à l'Ours during the summer, was not a person to offend.

"Come on, Robin," Anne said. "We might as well have tea here."

But when, following a few minutes later, in the broad wake of the *châtelaine* of "Mon Désir," they reached the restaurant booth, they found a scene of confusion.

"Where," Madame Despines was demanding in a very loud voice, "where is my gélatine of ham? Where is my boned turkey? With my own hands I packed them this morning. I sent my gardener with them. He brought them here. Where are they now? I do not like to make any unjust insinuations. But —my gélatine is tempting. As for my boned turkey——"

But this was more than Madame Ulysse Fortain could bear. She did not come from Quebec, but from Bonne Rivière. She did not live in a summer cottage, but in rooms over her husband's store. Nevertheless, she was a person of prominence in the parish of Bonne Rivière. Why should this woman from Quebec insinuate——

"Madame does her chef too much honor," she interposed, in a thin, very acid voice. "We other ladies can restrain ourselves from what he produces in the way of gélatine. Of boned turkey, also." And she was going on to tell Madame Despines one or two other home truths, when Robin tugged at Anne's skirt.

"Here's our chance to get out of this," he whispered. "The air in this hall is stifling. Come on."

Without much difficulty, they made their way to the door, where Henry Aspinwall was waiting. But at that instant Robin seemed, for some strange reason, to have changed his mind about going home.

"Henry will drive you back to Cap à l'Ours, Anne," he said. "I want to slip across to the tailor who's making my new homespun suit and try it on. I'll come along later. My horse is here somewhere."

Anne was too tired to protest. In a few minutes she was leaning back in the jolting calèche of the Aspinwalls, while Henry sat at her side, slapping the patched reins occasionally on the mare's broad back.

"What was the matter with Robin?" she asked, after they had driven in silence for five minutes.

"I think he saw a girl he wanted to speak to. She must have been in that booth close to the door. I mean the booth where that little maid of yours, Léontine, was helping to arrange some cakes and sandwiches."

"Oh," said Anne, slowly. "Yes, of course. I bought those cakes and had Léontine take them over to the Bazaar. Foolish to have to buy them, but Corinne's been away. Eli said she had to go up country somewhere to see an aunt who was dying. Very inconvenient just now."

There was no sound on the quiet road except the click, click of the horse's hoofs. It was just beginning to get a little dark, and the wind came in cold from the St. Lawrence.

"Have you met the new Laird?" Henry asked, pointing with his whip toward an old square whitewashed house of stone—that lay far off to his left, beyond the village, surrounded by pine and fir trees. "Can't say that I thought him very entertaining. He seemed like a fish out of water. He doesn't care anything about the country. He told me that he didn't see any fun in killing things. And he knows nothing about farming."

"I feel sorry for him," Anne said. "He'll have a terribly lonely time here, I'm afraid. And he doesn't like the French Canadians. He's got the same ideas that your mother cherishes."

"Well, there's something to be said for them, you know. You haven't lived among these people so long as we have. You don't understand them really. You only get carried away by the romantic exterior of things. Take this afternoon, for instance. There were you, a woman of English descent, a Protestant for generations, hobnobbing with a Catholic priest and making up tableaux about a lot of foolish saints. Why, people might suppose you believed in worshiping the Virgin Mary! I do think that Robin might be using his time better than in writing blasphemous poetry for French habitants, and flirting around with—with——"

"The Scarlet Woman of Rome?"

"Not exactly. The one I mean isn't either scarlet or Roman. But never mind Robin. Let's talk about yourself. You look dead tired, Anne."

They were passing along the side of a long field in which small square patches of green grass stood out against the grayness of the old cow pasture.

"The greens are getting better every day," Anne said, after a long pause. "I made that fourth hole, over there, in three yesterday. But the course is too short. If we could only extend it; get that long stretch of land up there on the hill."

"What wonderful dreams you have! There will never be enough people up here in the summers to make such a golf course possible."

Henry let the steady old mare slip from a trot into an ambling walk. He was in no hurry. Cap à l'Ours was at its best in these early days of September. He had had to come back to it. The two-week holiday that he had taken in June had not satisfied him. In that stuffy law office in Ottawa he had not been able to breathe.

Now they were driving slowly along the village street. Where houses had been burned to the ground four years ago, new homes had all sprung up again. But you could still mark the line of the fire, by the new trees that had been planted there.

Why had he come back again to Cap à l'Ours, all the way from Ottawa? To say ten words to this girl at his side. And now that he was here, he could not say them. He did not want to say them. All he wanted was to drive on and on with her, like this.

If he did speak, perhaps all this happy, simple companionship would come to an end.

"I beg your pardon, Anne. What was it you said? I wasn't listening."

Anne stretched her straight, powerful body luxuriously in the corner of the calèche.

"I said that this hadn't been such a bad summer after all. You remember how I dreaded it? But Mother has been fairly easy to get along with. And she brought that old nurse of hers with her. I wish she'd taken a real trained nurse. But she had this woman when Mary was born, and she wouldn't hear of having anyone else. Personally, I don't think that Nurse Jenkins, as she calls herself, knows any too much. But her being here makes me feel easier in my mind. No, I've had rather a good time."

"And you'll win the women's golf tournament, won't you? Sorry I can't be here to see you win it. And there'll be lots more picnics, I suppose—and other men and——"

"Oh, I'm getting tired of picnics. And as for men—well, I'm not so keen about that side of life. I do love children though. Monsieur le Curé says that I have a gift of understanding them. If I could have the babies, Henry, without the husband, why, perhaps—I'm sorry." She broke off abruptly. "I'm shocking you. But you've spoiled me. I've learned to talk to you as I never talk to any other man."

Henry gathered all his courage together.

"Then why don't you—why don't you——"

He hesitated, coughed. She cut his confusion short.

"Why, don't I do with men what Robin does with girls?"

A wave of embarrassment flushed Henry's sunburned face to the roots of his hair.

"Oh, Anne, you know that I didn't mean that—What I wanted to say was——"

But now it was she who was not listening to what he was trying so hard to say. She was thinking first about Robin, and his mysterious love affairs, none of them very serious perhaps, but disquieting because he was always so sly about them. And then of her father. She had watched him change a great deal during the past four years. There had been rows between her mother and him. Then something serious had happened, something that had been kept from her. Her father had looked hunted, frightened. And then there had been a great reconciliation between him and his wife. It had lasted for six months or more. But of late, especially since Mrs. Randolph had begun to expect her fifth child, she had seemed to feel so sure of her husband's fidelity that she had begun to boss him, to nag him again. And this he had resented. He had been with his family, here at Cap à l'Ours, for two weeks in August. He did not play golf. But he took long walks by himself. And in the evenings, he often went off to "Bouchard's," the simple little hotel that stood on a hill overlooking the new golf course, and that was filled with English visitors during the summer. For in spite of people like the Aspinwalls, Cap à l'Ours was becoming more and more popular every year.

So Anne was not entirely at ease about her father. She blamed herself for not having tried to be with him more frequently during his two-week holiday. And now she recalled a rather puzzling experience. It had happened just before her father left Cap à l'Ours, to go back to his furniture factory. Anne had been driving home from a late picnic with Henry Aspinwall. They had stopped to let the horse drink at a wooden trough that stood at the foot of the hill, just below Bouchard's. As she had sat beside Henry in the calèche, hidden in the shadow of overhanging trees, two people had come out from these same trees, into the moonlight. A man and a woman. And the man's arm had been about the woman's waist.

"Walk with me as far as the shop," Anne had heard the woman say. "You've shown yourself at the hotel."

Then the man had taken the woman in his arms, and had kissed her. They had walked on, and were soon lost in the shadows. But the outline of the man's head and shoulders against the sky had seemed to Anne disturbingly familiar.

She dragged her mind back to the present. How dead tired she was! And she was treating Henry very badly. They were almost home now.

"You're not angry, are you, Anne?" she heard Henry say.

Impulsively, she turned toward him and put her hand on his knee.

"Of course not. Why should I be? I'm merely too weary to talk, or even to listen. But I feel that you understand. You know, Henry, that you're the most comforting man I've ever met. You never fuss or bother me. And if anything should ever go wrong, I'd feel sure that you'd be somewhere near to help straighten things out. Thanks for driving me home. I'm afraid that it hasn't been a very amusing drive for you."

Henry stopped the horse at the bottom of the veranda steps. He started to get out of the calèche. But Anne checked him.

"I ought to ask you to come in to tea, but I've got to take a tub, and change my clothes. Still, if you don't mind waiting——"

Henry didn't mind. He had not sense enough to realize that Anne did not really want him now. He only knew that in two days he must go back to Ottawa, and that every minute with her was precious. So he tied the horse to the veranda rail and followed Anne into the big living room.

"Hello!" said Anne. "That's strange! No one has set out the tea table. That's because Corinne is sick, I suppose. But it's not like Léontine to forget. Wait here, Henry. I'll be down in a few moments."

She hurried up the stairs. And Henry waited.

The partitions in summer cottages in those days were very thin. Voices and noises often re-echoed through a whole house in a most embarrassing manner. So Henry was not surprised to hear voices from the up-stairs part of the Randolphs' house. But when the voices were overlaid by the sound of a woman sobbing and then wailing in a high-pitched, excited manner, he grew restless. He felt that he ought to slip away. Something was happening up-stairs; something that he had no business to be listening to. He tiptoed out on to the veranda, untied his horse, and drove away as quietly as he could. Anne would understand.

As a matter of fact, Anne had forgotten all about him. She was sitting by her mother's bed, trying to quiet the hysterical, angry woman, while Nurse Jenkins, a fat, fussy little figure, was scurrying about the room trying to remember where she had last seen that bottle of smelling salts.

"I can't bear it! I can't bear it!" wailed the woman on the bed. "He knew that I couldn't go about with him this summer. He had a free foot for the first time since Mary was born. And such a plain-looking baggage, too! She keeps a shop! She keeps a shop!"

"Well, Mother," comforted Anne, "Father manufactures furniture, doesn't he? But you're working yourself up without any real cause. Do be quiet. You know how dangerous all this is for you just now. Don't let yourself imagine——"

"Imagine?" Mrs. Randolph's voice rose to an infuriated scream. "Look for yourself," she cried, dragging from beneath her pillow two or three crumpled sheets of a letter. "He left his homespun coat behind. I sent it to Madame Couturier to be cleaned. And she—she sent back this letter—with her compliments. Said she had found it in one of the pockets—and thought that it might be valuable. Valuable! I'll wager she read every word. The spiteful old cat! She always looked at me in a queer way!"

"But, Mother," consoled Anne, "Madame Couturier doesn't know a word of English. She couldn't read this letter."

"Then read it yourself, my child." Mrs. Randolph was sobbing now, clinging to her daughter.

Anne opened the letter with one hand, while with the other she patted her mother's heaving shoulders. But after a glance at the first few lines, she put it down. She couldn't read stuff like that. It appalled her; it frightened her. It made her feel physically sick. And this—*this*—had been written to her own father! Had he written letters like this in reply? He must have. She glanced at the signature. Some silly pet name.

"Have you read it?" wailed Mrs. Randolph. "Did you see that part about his wife who had never understood him? who had never given him the love that his better nature craved? And I suppose"—her voice rose again to a shrill, angry note—"I suppose that everybody here has known that my husband has been having an affair with that English woman who keeps the shop in the hotel and sells sweaters and homespun and habitant blankets. And here I've been chained to this house! Why? Because of his child! Mrs. Aspinwall must know. Everybody must know. It will ruin our position here, Anne. And after all the summers that I've worked and schemed and tried to make friends of the right kind of people! After I've built this cottage! Oh, I never want to see it again. And as for his child—I hope it's born dead. I don't ever want——"

Anne covered her ears with her hands.

"Stop, Mother," she shouted, losing her own control. "I will not listen to things like that. Be quiet."

Deprived for the moment of her audience, Mrs. Randolph threw herself back in bed and contented herself with moaning in a low, quavering voice. Nurse Jenkins, having at last found the smelling salts, applied them rather unexpectedly to Mrs. Randolph's nostrils. Mrs. Randolph choked—sneezed—panted; and seizing the bottle, hurled it out of the window. This seemed to do her good. In a few moments Anne felt able to leave her in the nurse's care. Then she remembered Henry Aspinwall, sitting down stairs in the living room. She remembered too the thin partitions. How much had he heard? She grew hot and embarrassed.

But the sitting room was empty. Henry's calèche and horse were gone. And Anne understood. He had slipped away in order not to hear. At that moment she felt closer to him, fonder of him, than ever before. Just then Robin appeared, coming apparently from the dining room or the kitchen. Anne turned on him almost fiercely.

"Robin, I know what you've been doing. You drove Léontine back from the Bazaar at Bonne Rivière. You waited for her." Robin spread out his hands with a gesture of expostulation that suddenly reminded Anne of her father.

"And why not?" he asked. "She'd walked all the way over there with your cakes for the refreshment stall. And she was hurrying back so as to get here in time to set out the tea table. So I gave her a lift. As I drove by with her in my calèche, I saw old lady Aspinwall glaring at me. I got quite a kick out of it."

At that moment, Léontine, a little breathless, but without a crease in her white apron, came in with the tea things. She paid no more attention to Robin than if he had been part of the brick fireplace. Anne began to be sorry for her outburst.

"I'll have tea for you in a minute, Robin," she said. "Sorry I look so untidy. I didn't have time to wash up. Mother's in a terrible state of fuss. Something has upset her horribly."

As soon as Léontine had tiptoed out of the room, Anne looked up at her brother. He recognized the look. That was the way she had always looked at him when, in their childhood, she had dashed in to defend him from rough boys who had taken away his sled, boys of whom he himself was afraid. She would always get him back his sled; but when they got home, she would cuff him for having been such a coward, and then she would look at him exactly as she was looking at him now. It always made him uncomfortable, and a little ashamed.

"Well, sister," he said; "what have I done?"

"I don't know, Robin," she answered. "I don't want to know. But for God's sake, be careful. One in the family is enough."

"One what?" he asked.

But she gave him no answer. She gave him his tea instead.

If there was distress and annoyance at the Randolph cottage on that late afternoon after the Bazaar, there was joy and great content at the Orphelinat Apostolique.

As Sister Onésime went up the steps of the orphanage, gathering about her her very weary charges—weary with the excitement of the *Tableaux Vivants des Vies des Saints*—and also very hungry—she turned to the Mother Superior with a gesture of despair.

"Reverend Mother," she panted, "I have been guilty of a great fault. What with all the excitement of the Bazaar, I forgot this morning—utterly—to order another sack of potatoes from the shop in the village. We ate the last potatoes yesterday. There is nothing in the house; nothing except half a loaf of bread. I do not mind—for myself—but the children are hungry—and you, Reverend Mother."

The Reverend Mother was tired, and a little cross.

"I confess, Sister Onésime," she said, "that I do not like dry bread. And I am very tired of potatoes. What is it, Amyas?"

Amyas, with the memories of his late archangelic glories still hovering about him, was tugging respectfully at the skirt of her brown habit.

"I will talk to Saint Anthony about it, Reverend Mother," he said, eagerly. "One moment—if you will excuse me—I shall speak to him at once."

The Reverend Mother sighed. She allowed Amyas to pass before her into the drab hall of the Orphelinat, and then, like a weary hen, shooed the group about her into the big living room, with its worn benches and its bare, bare table, leaving Amyas standing with clasped hands in front of the battered statue of Saint Anthony of Padua.

Now little Johnnie Carré, aged seven, had an intense love for moving water, especially for the great river, that could be seen from the back window of the room. He was staring out at it now. The other children, expectant, hungry, had ranged themselves about the table.

"Oh," said little Johnnie Carré, from the window, "there is something on the back steps!"

Sister Onésime, who was fetching the stale half-loaf from the cupboard, glanced over Johnnie's shoulder. She gave a sudden gasp. And in a second she was out of the back door, her brown habit swishing excitedly about her hurrying little feet.

In a moment she returned, staggering under the weight of a heavy basket, a basket covered carefully with a spotless table-cloth.

She put the basket down on the table, and uncovered it.

"Johnnie," she called. "Tell the Reverend Mother that the children are waiting to say grace before their evening meal. And tell Amyas not to bother Saint Anthony any longer. Saint Anthony has already heard his petitions." She sighed happily to herself. "He must be a good friend of Amyas'. No doubt because he played the Archangel so well this afternoon."

Thanks to a mistake on the part of Madame Despines' gardener, who had been told to take a basket to the Bazaar for the Orphelinat and who had found the orphanage itself nearer at hand than the Bazaar, eleven orphan boys and two very tired nuns feasted on gélatine of ham and boned turkey.

Several of the children were very ill that night. And they grew very tired of the taste of ham and turkey before the big basket was empty. But their devotion to Saint Anthony was greatly increased. And as for Amyas, they looked up to him as to one who had strange, powerful contacts with the Court of Heaven.

The Mother Superior sent back the empty basket to Madame Despines. But being a wise woman, she said nothing to Sister Onésime about it. After all, it probably was Saint Anthony who had misdirected Madame's gardener!

CHAPTER SEVEN

New Life Refused

HENRY ASPINWALL had gone to bed early on the third night after the Bazaar at Bonne Rivière. Not because he was particularly sleepy, but because he was sick and tired of listening to his mother's warnings against the doings of "middle-class Americans." He didn't mind it so much when she criticized Robin for driving off in a calèche, openly, with a habitant girl, a maid in his mother's house; or when she mentioned in a very guarded manner the unpleasant stories that were being told about Colonel Randolph at Bouchard's. But to hear Anne abused was more than he could bear. So he had left his mother comparing notes on the wickedness of rich Americans with her old friend, Doctor MacPherson, a granite-faced old Scotchman with sandy side-whiskers, who had once been the Aspinwalls' family physician, and who had brought Henry himself into the world.

There were no beds in the men's quarters of the Aspinwall cottage. Beds were for women or for rich Americans. The men who stayed there in the summer slept in bunks built along the side of the wall.

There were no sheets, either. The blankets were spread over a layer of fresh, fragrant fir or *sapin* branches. And one slept well there, almost as well as if one were out in the woods at some fishing camp.

Henry undressed, and then hunted through his pockets and found a cigarette. But he put it down, even before he had struck a match. Cigarettes were not considered "manly" by the Aspinwalls. He was at liberty to poison the air of his sleeping quarters with a foul old pipe—but not with a cigarette. So the young man was rather tense and depressed, when he finally wrapped himself in his blankets and pushed the hard pillow aside, so that his face could rest almost directly on the mattress of *sapin* boughs. He was asleep almost at once. Along in the night, hours later, he began to dream of a mighty trout, that kept breaking water just beyond where his flies touched the surface. He kept casting and casting, letting out more and more line; but cast as he might, he could never quite make his flies reach that tantalizing ripple—the ripple that hid the big fish. Behind him, at the back of the boat, a guide began to knock out his pipe on the gunwale. It made a deep, reverberating noise. A noise that disturbed him, that kept him from reaching with his cast the distant ripple and the big trout. Why didn't that fellow stop knocking on the side of the boat?

Suddenly he was awake; awake and listening to the dull sound that had roused him. Someone was pounding—softly but determinedly—on the door of the men's quarters. Knock—knock—knock! What could be the matter? He staggered out of his bunk, found matches, and lighted the lamp. In the farthest bunk old Doctor MacPherson was snoring gently. Now the knocking had ceased. Evidently the person outside had seen the light of the lamp.

What was it? Another fire, perhaps? Some drunken carter on his way home who had missed his own house? But the men were not drinking much these days. He unbolted the door and held the lamp above his head.

"Anne!"

She was leaning against the side of the door, panting and holding her hand to her side. An old raincoat scarcely covered the disorder of her skirt and shirt-waist, half-buttoned, sagging. Her bare feet had been thrust into slippers that were now soaked and torn. Her brown hair was flying about her face.

"I'm almost done," she panted. "I thought you'd never open this door. I didn't want to go to the other part of the house and wake your mother. Is Doctor MacPherson here? Wake him, Henry, right away! You must put on your own clothes and bring him to our house at once. No, don't waste time talking. It's Mother. Something happened a few days ago that upset her badly. Since then she hasn't been sleeping. Last night the nurse gave her some bromide or something. About midnight she got up, half dazed with the stuff, took the wrong turning in the hall—and went right down the stairs on her head. Wonder she wasn't killed. But no bones seem broken. Only—oh, do hurry with your dressing, Henry. Wait! I'll wake Doctor MacPherson myself."

Now Doctor MacPherson had, many years ago, learned how to wake up quickly in the middle of the night, and to have his wits about him almost before his eyes were open. At Anne's first touch on his shoulder, he sat up, and in a few seconds was out of his blankets and pulling on his baggy homespun knickerbockers as unconcernedly as if Anne had been some nurse in uniform who was calling him to the bedside of a patient.

Henry was still dazed. He caught a few phrases, as Anne talked quickly with the old physician.

"Not expected for another month—but the mental shock—and then the fall. We've got a nurse—a 'practical' nurse, she calls herself. She was all right at first—seemed to know what to do. But after a few hours she got scared—or I thought so anyway. And Mother seemed in great agony. You can hear her groaning all through the house. So I thought of you—Henry told me you were here. I hate to bother you—but—I couldn't help it."

"Henry, get out of my way," Doctor MacPherson snapped. "Go up-stairs and see if we've wakened your mother. If we have, tell her to go to sleep again." Then he turned eagerly to Anne. "And now, young lady, we'll be going. An obstetric case! Land of love! Land of love! And me without an instrument of any kind—and not made a delivery for nigh on ten years. But maybe nature will take care of things for us."

"There's a doctor in the lower village," suggested Henry.

"Away with you, man," snapped Doctor MacPherson. "I'll have no French habitant butcher, with his dirty hands, messing up any case of mine. Come on, young lady. Show me the way."

Henry followed Anne and the doctor out of the men's quarters. The sky was already flushed with long rays from the unrisen sun. He went around and opened the front door of the cottage. In those days at Cap à l'Ours, no one ever dreamed of locking their doors. To his surprise, his mother met him on the threshold. He told her in a few words of Anne's coming, and begged her to go back to bed at once. But not she.

"Rich and thoughtless Americans they may be, my son," she said, turning back toward her room, "but they are neighbors. And they are in trouble. Wait for me in the hall. And have the lantern lighted. It will be dark on the path through the woods."

It was eight o'clock now. The cool, early-morning air had penetrated the living room of the Randolph cottage where Anne and Henry and Robin had been sitting since five o'clock. In the house, above them, they listened to the sound of footsteps going back and forth, to the quavering treble of the nurse, the common-sense tones of Mrs. Aspinwall, and the deep booming of Doctor MacPherson's voice. In between, filling in all the spaces of half-silence, was a low moaning, like some animal in pain; a moaning that every now and then would rise to a cry of agony, only to sink back again into the same muttered groaning of exhaustion. It seemed as if the tension would never end. Anne sat between the two men. Robin's hand had stolen into hers. Every time the sharp cry of agony came from up-stairs, she would feel her brother's fingers tighten and tremble in her own grasp.

A little after eight, heavy steps creaked down the front stairway, and Doctor MacPherson came into the living room. His coat was off; his sleeves rolled to the elbow. He turned at once to Anne.

"You will please send someone at once to the lower village, to fetch the French doctor there. Henry had better go. He knows his name. You will tell him, Henry, that Doctor Hugh MacPherson of Toronto requests his presence at once in a consultation on an obstetric case. And tell him, for God's sake, to bring any instruments that he has. Do not let him delay. Bring him back with you. Do you understand?" Then he put his hand very kindly on Robin's shoulder. "As for you, you will go with Henry to the lower village, where there is a telegraph office. And you will wire to your father. He had better come."

Robin's face went suddenly white. He had an intense, sentimental love for his mother.

"I do not see the good of telegraphing, Doctor," Anne interposed. "At the very best it will take Father three days to get here—even if he happens to make connections with the Quebec boat. By that time——"

"I understand, young lady," the Doctor answered. "But he might never forgive you if you did not let him know."

Robin was fighting to get his voice under control.

"I'll go after breakfast," he stammered. "But is it as bad as that, Doctor?"

"Young man, I do not know how bad it may be—yet. I only know that I am expected to deliver a woman well on in years, who has had a bad fall; a woman who does not seem greatly to want this child, who has no great incentive to bring it alive into this world, and the child is not so anxious to be born, either—a breech presentation, if maybe you modern young people know what that means. And all this I must do without instruments. Perhaps I can get something from the French doctor, though I'll not be trusting him too close to the patient. But I'll pay my respects, some day, please God, to that druggist in the village—what's his name?—Jolicœur; for he got up out of his bed two hours ago to send me up the sterilized stuff and the disinfectants. He's a man, French though he may be. Now, Henry, off with you. And bring me back that French doctor."

Henry hurried off. Doctor MacPherson went creaking up-stairs, and Anne was left alone. She wandered into the dining-room and found her brother, Robin, choking over the sketchy breakfast that Léontine had done her best to prepare, in Corinne's absence.

"I can't stand it, Anne," Robin burst out. "I never knew that—that having babies was like this. Listen!" He held up his hand. And through the thin partitions, both of them could hear the low moaning of the tortured woman in the room above their heads. "How long is it going to last? She's been like that for nearly five hours already. She can't suffer like that and live. Why doesn't the Doctor stop it somehow?"

Anne put her arm about her brother's shoulders. They seemed closer together than they had ever been since the days when Anne used to comfort him after he had run away from some impending boyish fight. She used to cuff him for his cowardice, but she always comforted him afterwards.

"All women have to go through that, Robbie," she said. "And it may last hours and hours yet. We've got to be patient—and trust the doctors."

"But they don't seem to be much use. Anne, I think I'll have a drink of something. See how my hand is shaking. I'm all in."

"Oh, Robbie, don't do that! It's so early! Besides, Mother might ask for you. You wouldn't want her to smell the whisky."

But the young man was too shaken, too sullen, to listen. He shook off his sister's arm.

"I've got to do something for Mother," he muttered. "I can't sit here like this." Then his eyes filled with tears, he choked, and put his head down on the table. "Either I want a drink—or else—I want somebody to pray. Only I don't know how to do it right. I want to do something to help Mother—and I can't—I can't!"

Anne was doing her best to comfort him, when she heard someone come down-stairs. She hurried out into the hall. It was Mrs. Aspinwall. Although she had dressed in great haste, five hours ago, she looked as meticulously neat and as perfectly complete as if she were coming down to her own trim breakfast table. She held a pile of folded linen in her arms.

"Come into the kitchen with me, Anne," she said, casting a glance of contempt toward Robin, who was sobbing, his head on the table. "Have Léontine build up the fire in the stove, so I can make some attempt at sterilizing this linen."

Anne followed her obediently. She hated to leave Robin. For as she entered the kitchen, she looked back and saw him get up and move toward the sideboard.

"How are things up-stairs?" she asked, as Mrs. Aspinwall bent over the kitchen stove.

"Not any too right," the older woman answered, while her efficient powerful hands moved hither and thither. She knew exactly what she wanted to do, and she was doing it as simply and directly as if she were writing a business letter. "But you American women are all spoiled. You have very little endurance. I am, on the whole, rather disappointed in your mother. I had thought her more courageous. And more reticent."

"You mean—that she is talking—too much about —about——"

"Exactly. Why wash one's dirty linen in public, even though the public be made up of a physician, a useless old nurse and a middle-aged woman like myself?—When my Henry was born, I was in the wilds of British Columbia with Mr. Aspinwall. I had very little help. And—I was in labor for twenty-four hours——" Her hard gray eyes softened for a moment. Anne had never known her to look so human, so kind. "The only doctor that I had wanted to dismember the child. It was its life or mine. But I——" Her lips set again in grim determined lines. "I would not hear of it." Abruptly, she turned to Anne, and, with an unusual gesture of affection, put her arm about the girl's waist. "Had I consented—think what I might have lost!"

Then, as though somewhat ashamed of her momentary outburst, she turned back to the stove.

"Don't stand there idle, Anne," she snapped. "Help me a little. No, don't touch those sheets. I've just sterilized them."

As Mrs. Aspinwall hurried back up-stairs, Anne caught the sound of wheels on the gravel road. Peering out from the kitchen, she saw Henry help old Doctor Lapointe climb down from the calèche. He was a burly, heavy-jowled little man, with a large, sweeping, black mustache. Doctor MacPherson met them at the top of the veranda steps, and he and the little French doctor, who carried a black bag, went hastening up-stairs.

Anne felt a light touch on her arm. She turned from the window. Léontine was standing beside her.

"Mademoiselle," the girl stammered, evidently rather embarrassed, and not at all like her usual self-confident self. "Do not make too much trouble for yourself. See, I will cook the lunch, and put it all on the table—cold. Then you can eat when you please. And, Mademoiselle, I hear and understand a little of what Monsieur Robin say to you just now. Look, while I am preparing the lunch, I will say my rosary for Madame up-stairs. See, I hold it in my left hand, like this, and with my other hand I fix the lunch. I will pray, Mademoiselle. Only—only take away the whisky bottle from the sideboard. Men—oh, men are sometimes so foolish. They must drink because they feel sad. And we, when we feel sad—well, we can pray. But sometimes it does not help the sadness very much! Yet the Good God and His Saints—they hear us just the same."

Anne, usually so undemonstrative, Anne, whose ideal of self-restraint was old Mrs. Aspinwall, put her arms about the neck of the little French Canadian maid and kissed her. It was done on the impulse of the moment. Anne soon forgot all about it. But Léontine never forgot. And although Anne never suspected it, that kiss utterly changed the French girl's whole attitude toward the young mistress of the house. If it had not been for that kiss——

"Oh, but, Mademoiselle!" whispered Léontine, as Anne turned and hurried up-stairs to her mother's room. Then, slipping another piece of wood into the stove and setting on it a pan full of water in which she placed an open tin of soup, Léontine reached into her pocket with her left hand, pulled out her rosary, and began murmuring to herself while she moved to and fro in the little kitchen.

"I will say the Sorrowful Mysteries. I will offer them to Our Lady so that she will intercede for Madame up-stairs and for the little unborn baby." She kissed the crucifix at the end of the rosary. "I believe in God, the Father Almighty—there is cold beef left over from yesterday—Maker of Heaven and Earth—and a head of lettuce for salad—and the Life Everlasting, Amen. Now, one Our Father, and three Hail Marys. If I hurry, maybe I can say my rosary over twice before luncheon time." Then, for a moment she stood silent, forgetful even of her prayers. "I wonder," she said half aloud; "I wonder about Corinne. Amyas promised to come and tell me. If he does not come, I must slip away after lunch—I am afraid of Eli." She clasped her brown fingers together over the worn beads of her rosary. "Why do men drink that stuff?" she asked dramatically of the kettles and pans that surrounded her. In an instant, she was back at her work again, working and praying. "The First Sorrowful Mystery. The Agony of our Savior in the Garden. Hail Mary—now and in the hour of our death."

But while Léontine in the kitchen worked and prayed, the feeling of apprehension and of approaching danger was deepening in the other rooms of the house.

It was after eleven when Anne came down-stairs again to look for her brother. He was walking up and down the veranda. He looked a little flushed; there was a slight film over his eyes. Anne shrugged her shoulders. What was the use of reproaching him now! Why had she not done as Léontine had said, and locked up the sideboard!

"Mother wants to see you, Robin," she said, softly. "The two doctors would like to talk with us also. Mrs. Aspinwall has been wonderfully kind. She took Mary and Eleanor over to her house early this morning. They'll stay there until Mother is either better or——" Robin had come closer; his feet shuffled a little. "Oh, Robbie, how could you! I begged you to leave it alone."

Her brother looked up at her with such a helpless, unhappy expression that she drew her arm through his.

"I only took one drink, Anne. Honest."

They had just reached the top of the stairs when, from the room on their left, their mother's room, a shrill, tormented voice rang out, a voice that they scarcely recognized.

"You are killing me—I tell you—you are killing me. And I can't die—I don't want to die.—Good God, why do you all stand there looking at me?—Do something—do something.—The pains are coming on again.—They tear me in pieces.—And nothing happens.—Take the child. I don't want to die——"

Like frightened children, Anne and Robin clung together in the hall outside their mother's room. Then the door opened. Nurse Jenkins appeared. The pompous, fat little woman, who had always appeared to think so well of herself, seemed to have shrunk like a punctured balloon. Her wrinkled jowl was sagging and shaking. Her hair was in disorder. Sweat was pouring down her face. She motioned to Anne, who came forward and stood in the open door, with Robin peering over her shoulder.

In the twisting, tormented figure on the bed, Anne found it hard to recognize the mother whom she had seen only the night before. It was not solely the absence of her mother's upper plate, that foreshortened and distorted the lower part of her face; it was rather the absolute stripping away of all the external aids to beauty, of all the carefully acquired habits of physical and mental restraint.

Pain and the fear of death had stripped her clean of pretense, leaving only the fundamental smudged outlines of a character that had been brought suddenly face to face with the Powers of Birth and Death, that was powerless in their presence, and hideously afraid.

"Anne!" called the strange woman on the bed. "Robin! Come in. I want you to hear what I say." Anne moved forward slowly. She felt ashamed, somehow; ashamed of her own womanhood, that gave her something in common with the woman that she called her mother. But Robin, in an agony of helpless self-reproach, pushed past her and threw himself on his knees at his mother's bedside.

"Mummy, mummy," he sobbed, reverting to the childish name which his mother had tried so hard to eliminate. "Don't die! Don't let them hurt you!" He glowered across the bed at Doctor MacPherson. "I wish I were a doctor. I'd make you better." Then he added in a burst of anger, shaking his fist at the doctor, "Why do you let her suffer? It will be your fault if she dies. I'll tell my father. He'll——"

But at the mention of his father, Mrs. Randolph lifted both arms over her head, and began to laugh and to scream hysterically.

"Yes, tell him," she shrieked. "Tell him that this is his work. If I die, he'll be glad. That's what he wants. Robbie—you understand. You were always closer to me than any of the girls. I don't want to die! I'm afraid. God, the pains are coming on again."

Doctor MacPherson's voice cut through her wailings like a hunting knife cutting through soft butter; butter that has been carried in a hot tin-pail on the back of a sweating guide down a long hard trail in the woods.

"Be quiet, Madame. You are exhausting yourself dangerously. Cannot you understand that you need every ounce of strength and endurance? Let these children leave the room. You insisted on seeing them. I could not very well prevent it. But now I insist on quiet."

He caught Robin by the arm and tugged him to his feet. Robin tried to glare at the physician, but at the same instant caught just a glimpse of Doctor Lapointe's face, as he stood behind Doctor MacPherson. The little French doctor's lips were twisted into a look of disgust and contempt that struck Robin like a sudden douche of ice-cold water like water from the Arctic Current which flows up the St. Lawrence and along the shore of Cap à l'Ours.

Robin stumbled out of the room.

Anne followed, more slowly. Doctor Lapointe held the door open for her to pass out, with a courteous little bow, and pointed to the door across the hall, the door of Anne's own room. Followed by Robin, she went in there. In a few moments the two physicians came in also.

"Mr. Randolph," began Doctor MacPherson, ad-dressing himself to Robin, who had slumped down on his sister's bed; "I am speaking to you as to the man of the house.—Although—I may as well include your sister in what I have to say." He turned for a moment toward little Doctor Lapointe. "My colleague, here, and I—" he used the word colleague with an intonation that, as Anne knew well enough, he would not have permitted himself twelve hours ago. "My colleague and I are anxious to have you understand the situation thoroughly. Dr. Lapointe will attempt to make a podalic version. That is, in plain words, he will try to alter the position of the child. A delivery would then be possible. But labor may be greatly prolonged. The question, therefore, is this. Will your mother's strength hold out long enough to bring the child into the world? Generally speaking, we both think that she *could* hold out if she really wished to do so. Her other deliveries—when you and your sisters were born—happened to be easy and normal. She has had no experience of a long, painful labor. She resents it. She wears herself out unnecessarily. And I must admit—without seeming to pry into matters that do not concern us—that she does not seem to wish to bear this child at all."

"Then why not take it away?" Robin interrupted. He was smarting under a sense of rebuke—that French doctor had no business to look at him so nastily. "What's the good of making her suffer? Of risking her life?"

Doctor Lapointe interposed. He understood English well enough. But he preferred to speak in his own tongue.

"Every woman, Monsieur," he said, "who bears a child, risks her life. There is always a possibility of something going wrong. And the physician, in these matters, carries a very grave responsibility. It is not only the life of the mother that may be in danger, the new life of the unborn child may be in danger, too. We physicians must do our best to preserve both lives. If, however, we have to choose between them, why, then, my church, which is my guide in matters of conscience, tells me that I must not murder an unborn child in order to preserve the life of a mother. If I have to choose between her and the child, I must choose the child, the new life that God is sending into this world for purposes of His own." He made a little apologetic bow toward Doctor MacPherson. "My colleague will forgive me this little excursus into the realm of moral theology. He is not of my faith. But still—we are both physicians."

Doctor MacPherson nodded his big, square head. His thick, white hair was standing up in disorder like the mane of a weary old lion.

"I was born a Presbyterian of the Wee Kirk," he said. "I do not, however, let any assembly of Presbyterian elders tell me what to do in an obstetric case. Nevertheless, Miss Randolph, we will do what we can. Now that Doctor Lapointe has brought his instruments, we can, if necessary, save the mother and lose the child." Anne gave a little shudder of horror. The old Scotchman understood. "That may be the only way," he added. "But if your mother will not exhaust herself unnecessarily, we may pull her through and get the baby also. It all rests, in the last analysis, with her. Only, my dear young lady, I cannot keep your mother from being afraid. Afraid of pain—afraid of death. The fear uses up her strength—it poisons her in some strange way. If—" he added slowly, weighing every word—"if she could forgive your father whatever he has done to anger her—if she could give some thought of love to the unborn child—and if she would not be afraid of risking her own life in order to give life to another—then Doctor Lapointe and I might see a happy outcome of this day's pain and unhappiness. We will now return to our patient. And if I were you, young lady, I should not leave the house. As for your brother—well, men are out of place in these emergencies, so he had better go and play golf—or take a drive. But—one word of advice, Mr. Randolph."

Doctor MacPherson, who had been standing near Anne's rather disorderly dressing-table, picked up a short piece of white ribbon, took a pin from Anne's pincushion, and carefully fastened the white ribbon to the lapel of Robin's coat. Then, followed by Doctor Lapointe, he left the room.

"Now what the devil did he mean by that?"

growled Robin, looking down scornfully at the white ribbon.

Anne could not help smiling. She was beginning to admire the strange old Scotchman. And he had rebuked Robin so gently.

"Surely, Robin," she said; "you know what it means when a man wears a white ribbon on his coat. He's taken the pledge. He's on the water wagon. Oh, now don't get angry and tear it off. Keep it there—for a while, anyhow. Or if you are ashamed to keep it on your coat, keep it in your mind."

Robin flung out of the room.

"I'm going to get some luncheon, Anne," he said, over his shoulder. "Then I'm going for a walk. I won't go far—not farther than Bonne Rivière. And if anything happens, you can send a calèche after me."

When he had gone, Anne went down to the veranda and sat there trying to read. It was no use trying to eat any of the luncheon that Léontine had prepared. She wondered where Henry Aspinwall was. Doubtless his mother had warned him to keep away. But she wanted someone. Where she sat, she could still hear her mother's moans; and occasionally the loud screams, the hysterical babbling of her voice.

The hours passed with ghastly slowness. Toward four o'clock, Anne must have fallen into an uneasy doze, for she awoke suddenly at the sound of a step on the gravel road that led up to the veranda steps.

"Amyas, is that you?" she called softly, glad to have someone to talk to. But to her surprise, the boy seemed to avoid her. He came as far as the steps, and then stood awkwardly, gazing up at Anne.

"Bonjour, Mademoiselle," he said, after a pause. "I come to see Léontine for a minute. You permit?"

Anne was disappointed. The boy always amused her. But today he was very serious. She nodded. Amyas started to go around toward the back of the house. Then, checking himself, he returned, and stood below the veranda, his face on a level with Anne's feet.

"Mademoiselle," he whispered. Instinctively, both Anne and the boy spoke in hushed voices. "At the Orphelinat, we are praying for Madame, your mother. Sister Onésime heard in the village about her—her sickness." He stopped, and lifted his head sideways, listening. From the room up-stairs came that same low moaning that had been in Anne's ears for the past twelve hours. The boy reached out a dirty but an unusually well-shaped hand, and touched Anne's shoe. "The golf tournament, Mademoiselle," he stammered. "You will play—surely?"

"I'd forgotten all about it, Amyas," said Anne. She suddenly realized what it would mean if anything should happen to her mother. She'd have to go into mourning, to get some black dresses, to—But the boy interrupted her thoughts.

"I, too, am praying for Madame, your mother. Because if you could not play in the tournament, if I could not be your caddie—then——"

Anne could not help smiling at the earnestness of the brown face that was staring up at her.

"Would you be as sorry as all that, Amyas?" she asked.

"But yes, Mademoiselle. And besides, I should have no money. Last summer when you won the ladies' tournament, I won two dollars from Ulysse Fortain. He is not a caddie of the first class. He pretends to lose balls and then sneaks out at night and finds them. And now—the day after tomorrow—if you do not play—well, Ulysse he will have all my money. He will grin with his dirty, broken teeth; and then I shall hit him in the mouth. And—Monsieur le Curé will not let me serve at the altar on Sunday. So I will pray for Madame, your mother, Mademoiselle. I will even speak about her to Saint Anthony. Always he has been a good friend of mine. Au revoir, Mademoiselle."

Shyly, reverently, he put out his hand again, as if to touch her shoe. But abruptly, he drew back, and faced about.

"Someone is driving up the road, Mademoiselle. I know the horse. It belongs to the Seigneurie. It is, I think, the new Seigneur who comes to call." Then, in a low hurried whisper, "I do not like him. He patted me on the head."

He disappeared in the bushes that grew close to the side walls of the cottage. Anne jumped up, aghast, embarrassed. She was in no condition to receive visitors. The young man in the calèche that was coming up the road wore a new straw hat—he had a stick between his legs—and gloves—yes, actually gloves! She understood in a flash. This was a visit of ceremony. The new Laird had heard nothing of her mother's illness. What could she do? She had not time to slip into the house. Her visitor had seen her already; he was bowing, lifting his stiff straw hat with great politeness.

So Anne stood her ground, smoothing her hair a little and pulling down her jersey. Her stockings, she knew, were all wrinkled around her ankles, but she had no time to straighten them.

The new Laird, Angus MacLeod, came up the veranda steps, his hat in his hand, his silver-handled stick crooked over his arm.

"Ah, Miss Randolph," he said, in a soft, rather pleasant voice. "I am fortunate in finding you at home. You see, I am trying to return some of the calls that you kind people made at the Seigneurie just after my uncle's death. I am so anxious to know all the summer visitors at Cap à l'Ours. I met a great number at Mrs. Featherstone's tea on Dominion Day. It was there that I had the pleasure of being presented to you."

"Won't you sit down," said Anne, breathlessly. She was utterly at a loss. What could she say, what could she do, to keep this visitor's attention concentrated on herself so that he should not hear the sounds of her mother's agony?

"Madame, your mother is well, I trust?" the new Laird went on.

Anne had a sudden impulse to say, "My mother is trying to have a baby up-stairs." But she nodded assent, instead.

Still she must say something. She gave the new Laird a quick, appraising glance. He looked good-natured, but not very clever. The commonest commonplaces would pass with him as polite conversation.

"I hope that you like your new domain," she said, with a nervous little giggle. The giggle pleased her visitor. He felt that it was a tribute to his attractiveness.

"Yes, and no, Miss Randolph," he began, crossing his legs, and toying with the handle of his stick. "In the summer, with all you charming people about, everything is, of course, delightful. But the winters! I do not look forward to the winters—all alone in the old house—and among these coarse, uninteresting habitants. My uncle seems to have understood them. But to me, they seem impossible—perfectly impossible—for, of course, we have nothing in common—nothing!"

"Oh, you'll like them better when you get to know them," Anne replied. "Go and see them in their own houses. Talk to them."

The new Laird held up his hands in protest. He did not care to admit that he could not talk with them because he did not understand what they said.

"Ah," he sighed, "if only they spoke a pure French that one could understand. My own French—such as it is—was learned at Tours. Perhaps you know that at Tours the most perfect French is spoken." He refrained from mentioning that he had spent only a month in that famous French city.

"I don't know much about Tours," said Anne. "But I do know that these people here speak the French of the time of Louis Quatorze. That ought to be good enough, I think."

"Ah, well," the new Seigneur answered, waving the subject aside with a gentle gesture of his gloved left hand. "I shall have as little to do with them as possible, socially. As for business, they rent their land from me, many of them, and I shall try to be a just landlord. Excuse me, what was that?"

From up-stairs came a series of drawn-out cries, shrill, piercing.

The situation was getting beyond Anne's power to control. But she made one more effort. If the young Laird ever found out under what conditions he had made his first call on the Randolph family, he would never be willing to look any of them in the eye again. And Anne did not want to offend or embarrass him.

"Oh,—that!" she said, as the young man started to his feet. "That's only my little sister Mary. She has been naughty. Mother has spank—has punished

—her and she is having one of her tantrums. I'm so sorry she disturbed you."

"How quaint!" said Angus MacLeod. He sat back at ease in his chair. He looked as if he intended to stay for tea. And Anne knew that she had no tea to offer him.

Just then she heard a quick step on the inner stairs. And out on to the veranda came little Doctor Lapointe.

"Mademoiselle," he said abruptly.

The new Laird turned, and Doctor Lapointe recognized him.

"Ah, it is our new Seigneur," he said, speaking in French, with a very polite little bow. "I am Doctor Lapointe of Bonne Rivière."

But Angus MacLeod merely stared at the newcomer without speaking. Apparently he did not understand a word that the doctor said. He turned to Anne, with ruffled dignity.

"May I ask," he said, "who this person may be?"

"He says," Anne answered, with twitching lips, "that he is one of your new liege subjects, Doctor Lapointe, of Bonne Rivière. Evidently he does not speak the French of Tours."

"Ah, yes, of course." The Laird was himself again. He nodded pleasantly to Doctor Lapointe. Turning to Anne, "He is here—professionally?"

"Yes," said Doctor Lapointe in English, not very good English perhaps, but perfectly intelligible. "I come for Madame Randolph."

"I thought—you said that your mother was well? I did not understand—I supposed——"

Anne was making signs to Doctor Lapointe. But either he did not understand them or else he chose to disregard them utterly, for gathering all his English together, he faced the new Seigneur, his long mustache quivering beneath the angry puffs of his words.

"Madame Randolph is at the present moment upstairs having a baby. You understand now, Monsieur? Not yet is the baby here. But it comes—by and by, perhaps. I think that this is not the time for making calls on beautiful young ladies. Or do you still think yes?"

He turned on his heel and disappeared.

Angus MacLeod stood staring after the doctor, his mouth wide open. He dropped his stick. As he stooped to pick it up, he dropped his gloves. Anne bent down to help him, and merely succeeded in pushing him off his balance. He glared at her.

"Don't be so upset, please," she said, holding out her hand. "I ought to have told you. I'm so sorry. I hope that you will come again, on some more propitious occasion."

But the Laird refused to be comforted. He had at last gathered together all his belongings and had started for the veranda steps. Here, however, he felt that he must make a dignified exit. He lifted his straw hat in a bow that was intended to express his disapproval of the entire situation. But as he did so, the stick, that he held tucked under his right arm, dropped and went rattling and bumping down the veranda steps.

"My God!" he exclaimed. "Damn! Miss Randolph, I wish you good afternoon."

For a moment Anne stood aghast. Then she began to laugh—then she began to cry. She could not stop. She felt as if she were being torn to pieces. As if some external force were shaking her as a dog shakes a rat. She began to be frightened. Never before had she been like this.

"Stop that," said a harsh voice in her ear. A big, powerful hand took her by the shoulder and shook her. She looked up into Doctor MacPherson's stern face. "That's enough. If you don't stop, I'll hold your head under the cold-water faucet." As the girl's sobbing, laughing hiccoughs began to subside, he said, gently, "I came down to tell you that your mother's going to get her way. I don't dare to let her labor continue. If she'd had any decent pluck, there'd have been another fine baby in the world by eight o'clock tonight. As it is, your mother's afraid to risk dying—so the baby's got to die."

He left Anne sitting there with her face in her hands.

She tried to make her mind a blank—but thoughts, appalling thoughts, kept coming.

Something was going on there, up-stairs—something hideous—something that would leave a stain on the house forever—something that meant defeat, loss, disaster. She could not stay under the same roof with it. She ran around the house—up to the little hill behind it, the hill from which she had once watched the village fire; and there she threw herself on the ground, shut her eyes and covered her ears with her hands.—And yet, she seemed to be seeing the thing that she feared to see—to hear the sound that she dreaded to hear. The cry of the unborn life that had been pushed brutally back into nothingness at the very Gate of Birth.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A Mother Courageous

It was a little after three when Robin Randolph left Anne on the veranda of the cottage and started off to walk by himself; just to get away from the sound of his mother's wailing; just to get free from all the hateful, disgusting atmosphere of child-bearing. He felt degraded, soiled.

"But I don't want Mother to die," he kept saying to himself as he stalked through the little village of Cap à l'Ours, scarcely noticing the men who touched their hats to him or the women who called him by name. "Only I can't bear to have her look like—like that; or talk the way she talked. It's all too ugly—too brutal!"

He avoided the golf club, knowing that he must meet there a lot of people who would ask him questions, and took a rough path that led along the water's edge, and that brought him out at last just beyond the end of the links, on the road to Bonne Rivière. He would have liked to sit down on the banks of the St. Lawrence and watch the great, peaceful river until his depression had lifted. The river always soothed him; gave him confidence. But he didn't dare loiter there now. He had to stay near houses and people, in case Anne should need him and send someone to fetch him. So he walked slowly along the dusty highroad, watching the high, pointed steeple of the parish church at Bonne Rivière, that stuck up so sharply from among the group of houses that clustered about it. The Orphelinat lay just ahead of him. For a moment, he thought of turning in there. He and Anne always paid at least one visit each summer to the Mother Superior, who received them both in her little *parloir,* where she sat behind the lattice. But Robin was shy; he would not for the world have sat in that *parloir* alone with the quiet, dignified nun, lattice or no lattice. And yet, as he walked past the Orphelinat, he wanted to go in; not to see the Mother Superior or the orphans; but to get something there—something that belonged to him—his mascot—the thing that brought him luck. Anne always laughed at him. But Robin believed in his mascot, all the same. He was uneasy whenever it was out of his possession.

It had begun years ago, just after the Orphelinat had begun to grow, at the very first bazaar that had been held to raise money for it. At that bazaar he had taken a chance, for ten cents, on a little doll, not more than six inches high, dressed like an orphan, in dark-blue cloth, with a red necktie, and red stripes on the sleeves of its little jacket. And he, who had never in all his life before won anything at a raffle, had won this doll. It became his "luck." He had had it with him at school the year that he won the hundred-yard dash and got the prize for English Literature. He had had it at college the year that he had made his club, a much more swagger club than he had ever hoped to make. And every summer he brought the little doll with him to Cap à l'Ours, brought it to the Orphelinat, this "Orphan" of his, so that it might revisit its former friends, as Sister Onésime said, and have a new blue suit put on it, new red stripes, and a new red tie. And when it came back to him, all fresh and newly dressed, Robin used to feel that his good luck had returned, that it was ready to meet all the dangers and difficulties of the coming year.

But this summer he had been careless. He had taken this mascot of his to Sister Onésime early in July. It had been redressed and rebeautified; but it had been lying at the Orphelinat waiting for him during all these weeks. And he had forgotten to go and fetch it. Of course that was the reason why all this trouble about his mother had happened. He hadn't had his little Orphan with him in the cottage.

Still, he told himself, he could make Anne go to the Orphelinat with him tomorrow, and he would get his mascot back.

Tomorrow—— But by that time——

He could not wait till then. He turned back and mounted the steps of the Orphelinat. His hand was on the latch of the outer door, when the door opened. Monsieur le Curé was just coming out. He stood aside to let Robin pass.

"Ah, bonjour, Monsieur Robin," the Curé said. "We are all so anxious to have news of Madame, your mother." Then as Robin shook his head, the Curé went on, "Well, we must have patience, and trust in God."

"Trust in God, Monsieur le Curé," he answered, making no effort to hide his antagonism. "That is easy enough to say."

"But hard to do, Monsieur Robin. And the hard things are often the best things—the only things that get us anywhere. We are all praying for your mother. But forgive me, I am detaining you. You wished to see the Reverend Mother?"

"No," stammered Robin. "That is—she has got something of mine that she—that she has been keeping for me."

"Aha, I know. Your little Orphan. It is kind of you, Monsieur Robin, to keep that representation of our needs always before you. Because of it, you never forget us at Christmas. And believe me, we are all most grateful."

The Curé knocked at the little wicket in the inner door. Robin had a glimpse of Sister Onésime's brown habit. A moment later she reappeared and thrust a little package done up in tissue paper into his hand.

"We are all praying for Madame, your mother," she murmured to Robin, and then the little wicket closed once more.

Robin thrust the package into his pocket. He had his mascot again. He felt strangely encouraged. Besides, wasn't it really decent of all these people, strangers, comparatively, to be praying so hard for his mother! And he himself—ought he to be praying also?

In silence he walked by the Curé's side, along the street of Bonne Rivière. As they passed the door of the parish church, the Curé raised his hat.

"I will bid you good-by here, Monsieur Randolph," he said. "I am going into the church, to pray there for your mother, before the Blessed Sacrament. You see, we do not forget what Mademoiselle, your sister, and you have done for our Orphelinat. Our benefactors are in our prayers always."

"What a lot of prayers Anne and I get for our few dollars!"

Robin was embarrassed. He always felt embarrassed when people talked about religious things. The embarrassment made him uncomfortable, made him feel inferior. And he always reacted with some flippant remark that seemed to repair his damaged self-esteem. He wanted to annoy the people who had annoyed him. But the Curé understood him far better than he understood himself.

"You give what you have," the priest said, as he swung back the heavy wooden door that led into the church. "And from what we possess, we try to give in return. Perhaps you might care to sit in the church awhile. The September sun is still hot. And you look tired."

Robin shook his head. The priest bowed again, and the church door swung to behind the swish of his cassock. Robin stood for a moment, staring at the closed door.

After all, he thought, why shouldn't he go in? Just to rest for a moment. And since everyone here seemed to be praying for his mother, perhaps he could pray too. Looking about, to see whether or not anyone was watching him, and seeing no one on the village street, he pulled open the door and slipped into the cool, dim shadows. The wooden floor creaked under his feet. Then he struck the side of the pew into which he stepped with the toe of his boot. He seemed to be making a lot of embarrassing noise. But the pews were all empty. Far up, at the distant end of the nave, he could just see the old black bonnet and the narrow shoulders of some woman, kneeling in front of a big, gaudy statue of Christ. The hands of the statue were pointing to a flaming red heart, that made a brilliant splash of color in the shadows.

He looked slowly around him. He had never been in this church before. Indeed, except for a few cathedrals in France, he had scarcely ever set foot in a Roman Catholic church anywhere. Such churches made him feel uncomfortable—out of it all, somehow—a stranger in a strange house. He loved beauty in any form. The lines of a great cathedral thrilled him. But if a service were going on, he always tiptoed out into the air. The service meant nothing to him. It sometimes annoyed him acutely.

But here in this parish church of French Canada, there was no beauty at all. It was either simple to the point of ugliness, or else so ornate as to seem blatant. Rotten taste, he said to himself. However, it was quiet and it was cool. The tiny flickering point of fire in the swinging lamp before the altar caught his wandering gaze and fixed it. He leaned his head on the back of the pew in front and watched the little flame, as it fluttered to and fro in the soft breaths of air from an open window. He was conscious of great weariness; then of a sense of security—of contentment.

He must have fallen into a doze. For he came to himself with a sudden jerk that made his chin strike sharply against the pew on which he had been leaning. Creaking footsteps were coming up the aisle. Someone blundered hurriedly into the pew behind him. Then he heard the click-click of a rosary. He couldn't stay here any longer. Somebody from the village might recognize him. He didn't want them telling one another that he had been praying—he, Robin Randolph—in their ugly old parish church. He looked at his watch. It was nearly four. He must have been asleep. As softly as he could, he got up. His legs were stiff; his back ached; he felt dizzy.

As he passed down the aisle, he threw a quick glance at the person who had been kneeling behind him. A young girl in a white apron—without even a hat. Women ought not to come into church dressed like that. Why, it was just as if the church were her own home. Then, the girl lifted her face from her hands. Robin stopped. And their eyes met. It was Léontine. What was she doing here? And at such a time as this?

However, it was none of his business. He wanted to get out in the air. Nevertheless, he lingered at the back of the church. He felt better now. Perhaps it might be a good idea to speak to Léontine. Perhaps she had been sent to find him, had finally run him to earth in the church, and had not wanted to interrupt his "devotions."

He permitted himself a little sneering laugh. His devotions, indeed!

Léontine glanced over her shoulder. She must have seen him waiting. For there came to his ears a final click of her rosary, and he saw her get up from her knees, genuflect in the aisle—how gracefully she does it, he thought! and then tiptoe softly toward him. As she came close to his side, she put her fingers into the holy-water font, and held out her hand. He touched her moistened fingers, and then watched her make the sign of the cross from her forehead to her breast, from shoulder to shoulder. She seemed to be waiting for him to do the same thing. But he wasn't going to do it. Then, to his intense surprise, she reached up, standing on tiptoe, and with her own soft fingers signed him with the cross. He could feel the touch of the warm holy water on his forehead.

He became intensely embarrassed. What had she done that for, anyway? Making him feel like a fool. He turned away and made for the door. She followed close behind him, however. And they stood in the afternoon sunlight, on the church steps.

"What are you doing here, Léontine?" Robin asked, gruffly. After all, she was only a servant. She waited on him at the table; she washed the dirty dishes. But—she was very good to look at. And he still felt the touch of her fingers on his forehead. "Were you looking for me? Has—has anything—happened at home?"

Léontine shook her head.

"Not yet, Monsieur Robin." She was withdrawing herself from him, standing at a respectful distance—she who, a moment before, had been so close to him—back there in the church. "No, I ran away from the house for a little while—I did not think that Mademoiselle would care. I shall be back in time for dinner. You will not tell her? You see, I had a message. I had to come over to Bonne Rivière—to look for somebody—somebody that I love very much."

A flame of sudden jealousy sent the blood leaping to Robin's face. His ears began to burn. He might have guessed it. A good-looking habitant girl like

Léontine would have lovers enough. And hadn't Mrs. Aspinwall always said how immoral all the habitant women were? But what hypocrites, too! Running off to a *rendez-vous,* and stopping at the church on the way. Hadn't he heard in his history course at college that Roman Catholics could get indulgences and permissions to commit sins if they said a certain number of prayers?

And yet, back there in the church, she had looked so decent! She had touched him with holy water—dirty water, probably, with the fingers of so many people stuck into it. While all the time, she was on her way to——

"Do not be angry, Monsieur Robin," he heard her say, in her soft, clipped French, that was often so difficult for him to understand. "I will go back to Mademoiselle right away. I only stopped to say a prayer for Madame, your mother—and for my friend that I wanted so much to see. I will not look for her any longer. I have told Our Lady about her, anyway. She will keep an eye on her, while I go back to Mademoiselle at the cottage. Au revoir, Monsieur Robin."

But Robin had caught her rather roughly by the arm. Had he understood her rightly? Look for *"her"*—keep an eye on *"her"?*

"Wait, Léontine," he stammered. "Don't talk so fast. Say that all again, slowly. Who is the man who is waiting for you? The man that you want to see? That you—love so much?"

"What man?" Léontine's dark cheeks flooded with a wave of color. "No man waits for me. And I wait for no man—except, perhaps, for that devil, Eli Martel. If I catch him, he will be sorry. And love him? Non, non, Monsieur Robin. There is no man that I love." Then, under her breath, knowing that Robin could not follow her rapid French, "That is a lie, Léontine. You must be sorry for telling it—but later—later."

Robin stood staring at her, still holding her by the arm.

"Please, Monsieur Robin, let me go," Léontine hurried on. "There is the second cousin of my mother, Madame Napoléon Duchène, coming down the street. She has a bad tongue, I tell you. Walk with me a little out of the village. I will explain. I will speak slowly—so slowly."

Madame Duchène passed by on the other side of the street. She had always had a poor opinion of Léontine Dufour; and now here she was having a *rendez-vous* with an *étranger,* and right in front of the church, too. It would be wise to inform Monsieur le Curé. He would no longer take such an interest in Léontine. And she, Madame Duchène, must find out who the young *étranger* was. Tall, in gray homespun, with a felt hat. Her cousin, who kept the store at Cap à l'Ours, he would know.

Robin, however, had not even seen Madame Duchène pass. He was listening to Léontine. She reached only to his shoulder. He had to bend his head sideways so as to hear what she said. And, unconsciously, he slipped his arm through hers, so that he might the better understand her French.

"It is about Corinne," Léontine was saying, speaking as slowly and as distinctly as though she were reciting a lesson in Sacred History before the Ursuline Nuns in the village school. "I have no mother and no father. The Orphelinat is only for boys. So when Amyas goes there, I go into the family of Monsieur Gagnon. His boys they tease me or they do worse than tease. Am I not an orphan? Who eats more every day than her work is worth? And the daughters, they are angry when I do not do all the work in the kitchen. All the daughters except one, Corinne. And she is my friend—my mother—my sister—my everything. She was so beautiful, Monsieur Robin—so happy—until Eli came."

"Eli?" interposed Robin. "You mean her husband, Martel? I've been into the woods with him often. He's a good guide. And a good fisherman, too."

"But yes, in the woods Eli is good—always. But at home, only sometimes. And when he is drinking—never!" She shuddered and drew a little closer to Robin's side. "Before Monsieur le Curé stopped the drinking shops—two years ago, Eli was ruining himself, ruining his good name. I begged her not to marry him—he had been keeping company with her for years. But he can be nice, oh, very nice, when he pleases. So Corinne, she talked with Monsieur le Curé. He thought that if Eli had a wife and children and a home, he would not spend all his money at the *estaminets*. So Corinne married him. She loves him; she will love him always. And, Monsieur Robin, he is a devil. I would not dare to speak of some things he has done. But mostly in drink. That wakes the devil in him. Well, you know that Monsieur le Curé shut up the drinking shops last winter. It nearly broke his heart; but he did it. And Eli, who was one of the most wicked at that bad time, he has never forgiven the Curé for making him do penance, where all the parish could watch. Now he has more money. There is no drinking place to spend it all in. But sometimes Ferron, or Jean-Baptiste Goderault, who go often to Quebec, bring back with them some bottles. Many bottles. And then, ah, my poor Corinne! My poor Corinne!"

"But she seems happy enough," Robin interposed again. "Mother could not get along without her in the summer. She's so willing; she works so hard——"

"She must—don't you see, Monsieur Robin—she must work hard. For Eli. What does he do in the summer? Pretends that he is a carter, and drives for the *étrangers*. But people don't like him for long. He is very cruel to his horse. Even the gentlemen who take him into camp, don't take him now so often as they used to do. So Corinne—she is very important to him—not in the winter, or the spring, or the autumn—but in the summer, when she works for Madame, your mother. Nothing must interfere with that. If Madame, your mother, should be dissatisfied—if Corinne should be sick and Madame, your mother, get another cook whom, perhaps, after a while, she likes better than Corinne, then Eli will have nothing to live on in idleness during the long winter. Oh, I tell you, Monsieur Robin, that I have seen Corinne shaking with fear after breaking one of Madame, your mother's, teacups. Not for fear of her. No, indeed. She may scold a little. Afterwards she is kind and forgives. But for fear of Eli. For fear lest Madame, your mother, should take something for the broken cup from Corinne's wages. For fear that if she, Corinne, should break too many things, or spoil the stove, or make wrongly Madame, your mother's, morning tea, Madame, your mother, might—next summer—get another cook. And so this summer—this summer! Oh, it has been too terrible, Monsieur Robin! Too terrible!"

They were walking along, side by side, utterly oblivious of their surroundings. They had reached the line of straggling houses that are scattered between the two villages of Bonne Rivière and Cap à l'Ours; houses with small farms around them, poorer looking and more lonely than any of the houses in the villages themselves.

Léontine stopped here and leaned against a half-broken fence.

"What's the matter now?" demanded Robin. He was only vaguely interested in Corinne. But he was more than willing to go on listening, if Léontine would walk on at his side.

"I must finish my story before we get there," she said.

"Get where?"

"To Eli's house. That is it—just beyond the next bend of the road. Half an hour ago I passed it on my way to Bonne Rivière. But it was all shut up. Eli was not there. And he had told us that Corinne was going away to see a sick aunt at Baie St. Paul. Amyas was with me. He had come to your house this afternoon to tell me something—something that frightened me, and that made us both run off together. Only for an hour or two. We wanted to look at Corinne's house. But it seemed all shut up, as I told you. So I left Amyas there. And I went on to Bonne Rivière, to say a prayer for Corinne—and for Madame, your mother. And in the church—oh, Monsieur Robin—I am afraid. I do not know of what. But Eli is such a devil. Amyas had heard in the village that he had been seen at St. Jean des Pins—the next parish to this—and that he had been drunk there for two days. That frightened me. Amyas says that Corinne's two babies are at the Gagnons', with Corinne's mother. Eli left them there when he came to tell them that Corinne had gone to see her sick aunt."

Robin laughed. It seemed rather a pleasant thing to be able to quiet with his superior wisdom the anxieties of so interesting a companion as Léontine.

Although she had been in his mother's cottage the entire summer and he had watched her often enough, he had never before had such a chance of talking with her intimately. He must reassure her. For the moment he had entirely forgotten what was happening at his own cottage at Cap à l'Ours.

"I don't see what there is to be afraid of, Léontine." He used her Christian name with some diffidence. A hundred times at home he had shouted that same name down the stairs or across a room when he wanted hot water for his shaving or a bottle of ginger ale. Now, however, it sounded different, somehow—more intimate, and pleasanter—very much pleasanter. He patted her reassuringly on the shoulder. "And why has this summer been so terrible? I thought that you were happy with us."

"Oh, I was, Monsieur Robin. For myself. But not for Corinne. You do not understand. If I tell you about it, will you help me? Will you explain to Mademoiselle Anne why I am away from the house now, at so sad a time?"

"Of course, Léontine," Robin enjoyed repeating her name. He could not take a very fluent part in their conversation, because he had to be always hunting for the right French words. He made a secret resolution to take an extra course in conversational French at Princeton next term. "You may depend on me—absolutely—*absolument*."

"Then, listen. It is about Corinne's babies. Do not look at me so straight in the eye—Look the other way—I must say things that are not of an entire propriety—for a young lady. But"—she added with a shrug—"I am not a young lady. I am an orphan—and a kitchen maid."

"Oh, come now, Léontine," Robin protested, trying to remember the name of the King who married a beggar maid—a King with a long name that began with a "C."

"But I do not mind. Listen, Monsieur Robin. Corinne's first baby comes in the winter. That does not matter to Eli. In the winter Corinne is not making much money, in cash, by working in the house of Madame Randolph. And the second baby, she comes in the spring. That is not all right, but very nearly. Corinne, she has time to get well and to wean the baby and to be ready to open the house of Madame Randolph in June. But this third time! Everything went wrong, Monsieur Robin. Eli curses and swears that it is not his fault. That it is the fault of le Bon Dieu, who sends the babies but does not send them always at the right time—the right time for Eli Martel. When the good Doctor Lapointe tells him that he may expect an increase of his family in September—maybe by the end of August—Eli sees that next winter he will have to work, himself, maybe. Or else go without tobacco, and now and then a bottle or two from Quebec. For if Madame Randolph learns that Corinne is about to—to add to the number of the Faithful, as Monsieur le Curé says—some time during the summer, why, she will not want Corinne in her kitchen. It might be awkward.

"Then my poor Corinne she promises that she will tell Madame Randolph nothing; she will wear tight corsets; she will do all sorts of things that I, Monsieur Robin, could not tell you if I tried. And so she does—all July and all August. And she is often so sick—so sick.—In the mornings always. The Good God be thanked that I could be there to help a little. That was why she wanted me, when Madame, your mother, asked for an extra maid. But one thing she could not know, my poor Corinne. The day that Madame, your mother, arrived, she came into the kitchen, waved her hands at me, and fainted across the kitchen table. When she came to herself, all she could say was, "Madame also! How could I ever have guessed! Madame also!" It was not until next day that I, taking up Madame, your mother's, early tea, understood what Corinne meant. And you say that this summer has not been awful —for us in the kitchen, I mean! Corinne always praying that she might hold out until the family had left; and always afraid that the thing she dreaded might happen at any time; that a morning would come when she would not be at your cottage to get breakfast ready—would not be there for days and days. So that Madame, your mother, would *have* to get another cook—and Eli would be angry. I wonder that we did not all become troubled in our heads!"

Robin had a keen sense of the dramatic. He was beginning to see the tragedy that might easily underlie such a situation as Léontine had described. He tried to remember how Corinne had looked these past few weeks. But anyhow, everything had turned out all right. It was his own mother who had won the baby-race.

"But there's nothing to worry about now, Léontine." He started to move away from the broken fence. "We ought to be getting home."

The girl, however, laid a timid hand on his arm.

"Not yet do you understand, Monsieur Robin. Yesterday morning, when I am in Madame, your mother's, kitchen, waiting for Corinne, Eli comes to the door. He asks to see Madame, your mother. He tells her that he is so sorry, but Corinne has had to go to visit her sick aunt. Madame, your mother, does not pay much attention. She had been *distraite* for the past few days. I say to Mademoiselle Anne that I can cook until Corinne comes back. And Eli goes out of the kitchen grinning at me. He had been drinking already; so early, too. I could smell it. I did not like the way he looked. But all that day I was so busy. And yesterday evening, when I passed Corinne's house on my way home, it was all shut up; no lights. And then, this afternoon, Amyas comes to me. He has heard that Eli is drinking in the next village along the shore. And Amyas has asked Monsieur le Curé about Corinne's aunt at Baie St. Paul. And Monsieur le Curé says that there must be some mistake; that the aunt died two months ago. Do you not see what I mean, Monsieur Robin?" Her voice dropped to a frightened whisper. "Often when Eli has been drinking, he has —he has struck Corinne. I have seen the bruises on her arms, on her throat. Oh, Eli is not really, really bad. He loves Corinne sometimes. But ever since he does not make much money himself from the *étrangers* and must live on what Madame, your mother, pays Corinne in the summer, he sulks—and then he drinks. And then he hates my poor Corinne. Ah, Monsieur Robin"—she clasped his arm with both her trembling hands—"I fear—I fear that he has struck her once too often—that something has happened to her—that Eli has hidden her —her body—somewhere. And her little new baby! Her little new baby!"

Robin tried to laugh. He did not succeed very well. Nor was he succeeding in reassuring Léontine. But he must not stand there any longer, on the main road to Bonne Rivière, with people in calèches or on foot passing every now and then.

"Come along, Léontine," he said. He squared his shoulders and set his hat firmly on his head. He must assume command of the situation, or else he and his mother's kitchen-maid would be standing by this broken fence all day. "You needn't be afraid. As we pass Corinne's house, we'll take another look at it. We'll walk through the garden—to see if Eli has buried her there."

This time his laugh sounded much more cheerful.

Still clinging to his arm, Léontine walked on beside him. At the next bend of the road, about fifty yards away, stood a small, two-story habitant house. In front was a little garden, neatly kept; behind the house, lay a tiny barn; and back of that, an acre or two of rocky, bare-looking land. The farm stood by itself, about midway between Bonne Rivière and Cap à l'Ours. The nearest houses on each side of it were several hundred yards away.

The gate that opened from the road was fastened against the gatepost by a few twists of strong wire. Robin hesitated. Had he any right to unfasten it?

"Wait," whispered Léontine. She seemed afraid to raise her voice. She called softly, "Amyas! Amyas!"

Amyas' head appeared from some bushes that partially hid the back door of the little house. He pointed to his left, to a gap in the fence, where Eli's land came to an end, a short distance up the road. In a few minutes Léontine had pushed Robin through the gap, and they joined Amyas, who led them silently around the house to the back, where they were concealed from people passing on the road in front.

"I am glad you have come, Monsieur Robin," he said. Like Léontine, he spoke in whispers. "I did not at first know who it was walking with Léontine. Eli might come back. I would not want him to find us here. Not if he has much whisky in him." Then he turned to Léontine and began to speak rapidly—so rapidly that Robin could not follow him at all.

"He says," Léontine whispered to Robin in slow French sentences, "that there is nothing to be seen in the garden, or on the land back of the barn. He has looked into the front windows of the house. It all looks as usual. But there is one window that is fastened, that has the blind drawn. Over there. See?" She pointed to a window, at the back of the house, about five feet from the closed back door. "But I know that there was never anything in that room. It is bare. Corinne was going to furnish it some day and rent it to some hired man."

"But, Léontine," Amyas interposed. "There may be something in that room now. Just before you came, I was trying to look in through the window, from the side of the blind, and I thought I heard something scratching—scratching—along the wall inside. It might be a rat—but—Monsieur Robin, you look."

In order to reach the window, Robin did not need the upturned pail on which Amyas had been standing. His chin was about level with the sill. He peered around the drawn blind. He could see nothing. He shrugged his shoulders. What a fool he was making of himself! And if Eli should suddenly appear, drunk and disagreeable, the situation would be extremely difficult. He was about to turn away, when, in the silence of the quiet, autumn afternoon, he heard a sound that sent the blood beating, buzzing, into his ears. A thin little wail—the mere ghost of a cry. It died down. Then it came again—more intense. He stood motionless—listening. And it seemed to him, standing so close to the house, as though he could distinguish the brushing, rustling sound of something—being dragged along the floor—or scraping along the wall inside. He turned his flushed, frightened face away from the window and looked down into Léontine's black eyes. They were snapping—alight with excitement.

"Did you hear it?" whispered Robin.

"I heard a little baby cry." Léontine answered in her ordinary tone of voice. She had forgotten to be afraid. "Of course it is a baby. Have I not heard them often enough!"

"But what can we do?" protested Robin. He was beginning to feel ashamed of his previous excitement. He had trespassed on a strange man's property expecting to find a corpse—and he had merely heard a baby cry. He did not like babies, anyway. They made him feel uncomfortable, embarrassed—just like religion.

Léontine's eyes seemed to scorch him. She had no business to look at him like that. Anyhow, she was only his mother's kitchen maid.

"We will do the doing, Amyas and I," she said.

With Amyas to help her, she was up, in an instant, on the overturned bucket, her face pressed close to the window. She tugged at the sash. It did not move. "Give me that stone over there," she called, over her shoulder. Then, putting her mouth close to the sill, she called in a shrill, excited voice, "I am going to break the window. Go away from it. Oh, Sacred Heart of Jesus," she breathed to herself, "I hope I don't cut the baby."

But no answer came from the room inside. Only a sort of scrabbling and scratching along the wall.

Crack! Crack! Fortunately, habitant window glass is cheap and easily broken. One or two big slivers fell inside; but the others Léontine worked loose from the dried putty, one by one. Reaching inside with her right hand, she caught at the blind and tore it from its roller. Then, for a moment, she peered into the room.

"Oh, God of Mercy! God of Mercy!" Her voice was choked by a quick sob. Up went her hand, it felt for the fastening of the window sash, and pushed it back. She thrust up the window. "Give me a boost," she said to Amyas, half turning her head. "I'll unlock the back door so that you can come in that way. Only don't try to get in till I call."

She disappeared inside the room. Robin and Amyas stood below, staring up at the opened window. Suddenly, Léontine's face and bust appeared at the opening again.

"Thou, Amyas," she called. "Run—run—and get Monsieur le Curé. Bring him back here. Tell him that it is for life or death. And if you can find him, bring Monsieur le Docteur Lapointe also. Hurry!"

Amyas dashed off toward the main road. He asked no questions; he simply obeyed orders. And orders he took from only three people in the world—Monsieur le Curé, his Mademoiselle, and his sister, Léontine. But Robin still stood, gaping up at the girl in the open window.

"As for you," Léontine said, pointing at him a stern brown finger—the same finger with which she had made the sign of the cross on his forehead only an hour before—"you stay here until I can break open the back door."

"But," protested Robin, feeling less and less like a satisfactory squire of dames, even though the "dame" were his mother's kitchen maid; "but suppose anyone comes? I mean, suppose Eli——"

She cut him very short, throwing the words to him over her shoulder as she turned away.

"If Eli Martel comes—kill him! Do you understand? Kill him! And if—" she made a gesture toward something that lay at her feet, below the window-ledge"—if you could see what I see—then you would think killing too good for him. But maybe——" she was bending down now over something on the floor; Robin could only just hear her—"maybe you are a man like Eli. Coward to coward. Pig to pig."

Robin stood beside the little house, biting his nails. It was only in moments of the greatest spiritual agitation that he reverted to this habit of his boyhood.

What a mess he had got himself into! Perhaps the best thing would be to slip quietly away. He had suddenly lost all curiosity about the bare room beyond that open window with its broken pane. Besides, the priest—perhaps the doctor—would be here in a few moments. Then he remembered that Doctor Lapointe was, at that present moment, working over his mother in their cottage at Cap à l'Ours. Léontine ought not to be left all alone. And yet what was the point of involving himself in some nasty, habitant row. Hadn't Mrs. Aspinwall always warned his mother about the danger of——

"You may come in now, Monsieur Robin."

Léontine had smashed the lock of the back door with her heel and was standing, panting, on the threshold. But Robin drew back. She came down the steps and slipped her hand through his arm.

"I am sorry that I spoke in anger. But come quickly—you must see for yourself. And anyhow, I have cleaned up the worst of the mess."

For some reason or other that he could not explain, Robin took off his hat as he entered the house, walking on tiptoe, and with a sense of reverence. They passed, side by side, through the little kitchen. Robin noticed that Léontine had already lighted a fire in the stove. Something was cooking there. It was rather dark; he stumbled over a chair, and knocked off a bundle of old clothes, that looked like a woman's underskirt. Something was rolled up in it, too, and as he bent to pick up the bundle, he realized that it was wet and sticky. But before he could do more than touch it, Léontine had pulled him away. She reached up and covered his eyes with her hand.

"Do not look, Monsieur Robin.—Do not touch.—Here, help me wipe your fingers." He noticed in a puzzled way that his fingers left red marks on the towel.—"And now come—this way. But walk softly."

He stood in an open doorway, looking across a room at an open window with a broken pane of glass. The room, at first sight, seemed absolutely empty. Not a stick of furniture. Nothing but the bare, uncarpeted floor. Then, in the farthest corner, leaning up against the outer wall, he saw the huddled figure of a woman. She was bending over a bundle, wrapped in a torn shirtwaist. He caught just a glimpse of her white breast. Then, moving against that spot of white, a tiny, wrinkled red hand.

He remembered how in Italy he had often turned away in disgust from the peasant women who suckled their children in the market places or on the steps of a church. The sight had offended him. But here—in this bare room—it was different. He bent his head. He came a step closer. He wanted to stretch out his arm and to hold back everything—everybody—the whole world—so that this mother might suckle her new-born child in peace.

Then the woman's face lifted; her white hand moved with an effort to cover her breast. And Robin dropped down on his knees at her side.

"Corinne," he stammered, seeking and finding one of the woman's cold hands. "What has happened? Why are you here all alone? How could any man be so cruel! If I ever find him—I'll—I'll——"

The hand was laid gently on his lips. A very weak voice said in halting, familiar English:

"Monsieur Robin, you like to look at my new baby?" She drew back the dirty ragged garment from the child's face. Robin made himself look. But how ugly it was! So red and so wrinkled. "I could not wash him yet very much, you see."

"He is a very beautiful child, indeed," Robin said. The mother's face lighted up with a momentary smile, that faded almost immediately as a wave of weakness swept over her.

"I think I'm going to faint again, Monsieur Robin," she whispered. "You hold my baby, please. And call—call——"

She dropped the baby into Robin's arms just as her head sank back against the wall.

"Léontine," called Robin, softly. But Léontine did not seem to hear. And he was afraid, somehow, to speak louder. He came into the kitchen holding the child in his arms. Léontine was stirring something on the stove.

"Go quick. She has fainted. She looks as if she were dying."

"I'll take her this," Léontine answered, as naturally as if she were accustomed to seeing Monsieur Robin every day with a new-born baby in his arms. "I found an unopened tin of soup. And some whisky that Eli forgot to drink. "You stay here with the baby. Oh, Monsieur Robin, I don't want Corinne to die till the Curé comes."

But Robin was not going to be left alone with a new baby. He followed Léontine into the bare room, and stood with the baby in his arms while she tried to make Corinne swallow a few spoonfuls of the soup. But the woman seemed too ill to swallow. Léontine put down the cup and began to chafe the cold hands.

"She has lost too much blood," she said to Robin. The baby began to wriggle in his arms. He saw the pursed, toothless mouth open, the eyes stare up into his. And out of it came that same thin wail—the wail that he had first heard half an hour ago, while he peered through the curtained window. It was such a shadow of a sound. And yet it seemed to reach to the consciousness of the woman who lay there in the corner, motionless, apparently lifeless also. Her hands moved; she opened her chemise; she began to feel about for her baby—her baby who was hungry. Dying though she might be, she must feed it, as long as she could hold it.

"Poor baby," crooned Léontine, taking the child from Robin and placing it beside its mother. "There cannot be much for it to feed on not after two days of starvation. Ah, look—look——"

The baby had somehow found its mother's breast. Its eyes were closed.

"But—I do not understand," Robin said. Until now, he had been too excited to ask questions. Léontine shook her head.

"Neither do I—not completely. But I know Eli. He had been drinking. Perhaps he struck Corinne. Perhaps that brought on the birth-pains. Perhaps they came anyway—just then—by evil chance. And Eli knew that Corinne could not go to your house that day—or for many days after. She might lose her place. That would make him most evil. I tell you he has a devil sometimes. If Corinne could not earn money, then let her die—she and the bothersome child. So he locked her in the empty room, took her two little children to her father's, and then fastened the doors of his own house. Then he told Mademoiselle, your sister, that Corinne had gone to Baie St. Paul, and he himself went off to drink some more. Oh, he will come back!"

"But he couldn't be such a brute," persisted Robin. "To shut up his wife—in such a condition—all alone—in a locked room."

"She is only his *créature*," Léontine said. "I tell you, he intends to come back. If he finds her alive—with the baby—well, she has been taught a lesson. Next time she will not let babies interfere with her money-making. If he finds her dead—that is well, also. Women do die, you know, Monsieur Robin, when they are having babies. And there are plenty of other girls for him to marry *en secondes noces*.

The only thing he did not bargain for was our coming here this afternoon."

"Wait till I see him! I'll tell our people about him. No one will ever take him into the woods again. I'll see to that."

"Yes, and make things all the worse for poor Corinne."

"Then she ought to get a divorce. It isn't right—it isn't fair—to leave a decent girl like that in the power of a——"

"We Canadian women do not even speak of divorce," Léontine answered proudly, gazing down at the half-conscious woman at her feet, whose arms were just able to hold the baby's head to her dry breast. "Sometimes Monsieur le Curé allows a separation, but that is not a good thing for the children. Besides, the wife has to make some complaint—and Corinne will never complain. She will never tell what happened here yesterday. No one will ever know how she bore the pain and the hunger and the loneliness. And all alone. All alone. Ah, my poor Corinne!"

"But why don't you do something for her? She may be dying——"

"The baby is alive," persisted Léontine. "Besides, what can I do? I am waiting for—— Listen, Monsieur Robin! I think they are coming, at last."

From somewhere on the road, at the front of the house, Robin heard the harsh clang of a bell. It sounded like a big dinner bell calling men from the fields to their meals in a New England kitchen. Here, in French Canada, it seemed quite out of place.

"It is Monsieur le Curé with le Bon Dieu," cried Léontine. "Stay here with Corinne. Pick up the baby if she lets it fall."

In a few seconds she had dragged a chair into the bare room, had covered the seat of it with a white towel, and then, darting out into the kitchen again, had brought in two kitchen candles in battered tin candlesticks. Meanwhile, the sound of the bell was coming nearer and nearer. Now it sounded along the side wall of the little house.

"A match, quick," demanded Léontine. "Light the candles."

Robin was lighting the second candle with fumbling fingers, when he saw Léontine fall on her knees. He turned about, surprised, embarrassed. In the doorway stood Amyas, a lighted taper in one hand; and in the other, a small, cheap bell, that was still jangling. Behind him came Monsieur le Curé. Robin had expected that Léontine would rush up to the priest, tell him her story, and that then, at last, a doctor—some kind of a doctor at least would come—and do something—something sensible and helpful for the dying woman on the floor. But nobody said anything. Léontine did not budge. Even Amyas knelt down.

The priest took something from about his neck, and placed it on the white towel that covered the seat of the chair. Then he went to where Corinne lay, with her back against the wall, her baby held loosely in her lap. He knelt down beside her. Robin just caught the low murmur of his voice. He saw Corinne's eyes open; saw her try to speak. But she could only nod her head.

The Curé went back to the chair. He knelt down again. He took something into his hands.

As gently, as softly as he could, Robin tiptoed out of the room. He had no business there, he felt. Something was going on that he did not understand. Something that made him feel "out of it"—a stranger, an interloper. But for a moment he wished that he could understand why these people were all on their knees. He would have liked to kneel down himself. For it seemed as though some unseen, mysterious power was focused to a point of almost unbearable beauty in that bare little room.

He waited just outside the door, and could see nothing now except the woman on the floor with her baby in her arms. It must have been the wavering light of the two candles that stood beyond his line of vision on the wobbly old chair, for a strange radiance shot through with little waves of bluish brightness seemed to be encircling Corinne, touching her bowed brown head, her white face, and the bluish whitish curves of her bared breast.

The Randolph family always made fun of Robin because when he heard good music or watched some powerful play, he often had to wipe his eyes. Under such circumstances, he usually tried to get at his handkerchief by pretending that he was searching his pockets for something else. So now, as he stood staring at the white light that flickered over the motionless woman and her baby, his hand went automatically from one pocket to another. He pulled out something soft. But that was not his handkerchief. It was the little bundle done up in tissue paper that Sister Onésime had given him that very afternoon. He wiped his eyes furtively with one end of the tissue paper.

"Monsieur Randolph!" Robin jumped and thrust his Orphan back into his pocket again. The Curé was speaking to him. "I am very grateful to you for your help. Especially at a time when you have so much sorrow in your own home." Robin winced; he had forgotten all about that. "I think that you have saved Corinne's life. Another hour or two—another night—and it might have been too late. She will recover, I think. Our women—" he spoke with an accent of pride—"*our* women are accustomed to hardships in child-bearing. Corinne's mother will be here very soon. She will take her daughter home with her. Then Doctor Lapointe can see her there. As for yourself, perhaps you will allow me to send you home in my calèche. Amyas will drive you."

A feeling of insignificance—a momentary sense of humility—had come over Robin. He, a senior of a famous American university, felt that his own attainments, his own knowledge, of which he had been so proud, were shrinking and shriveling somehow in the presence of this peasant priest. And strangest of all was the fact that he did not resent it. He liked to be told what to do. He almost wished that this man would go on telling him. That would make everything so simple; so easy.

"Thank you, Monsieur le Curé," he said. "But I have done nothing at all. Léontine should be complimented, not I. And—if there is room in your calèche—I should like to have her drive home with me. If there is not room—then I—I can walk."

The priest turned and looked rather searchingly at Léontine. She was blushing. But her head was up, and her eyes met those of the priest without wavering.

"Monsieur Randolph is very kind," she said, making a little curtsy to the Curé. "I will sit on the front seat with Amyas."

"Come on, then," whispered Amyas, sideling up to Robin.

"Au revoir, Monsieur Randolph," said the priest. Then catching sight of a bit of tissue paper protruding from the pocket of the young man's homespun jacket, he added, "But you are losing something. Ah, I see. It is your famous Orphan."

"My mascot," interposed Robin. "It brings me luck."

The priest frowned.

"We do not approve of charms and mascots, Monsieur," he began. Then, checking himself, he allowed the stern lines of his mouth to relax in his familiar smile. "But after all, God uses material things for spiritual ends. Let me have your Orphan for a moment."

Rather sheepishly, Robin unwrapped the tissue paper. The Curé went to the door of the kitchen, beside which there hung a little cup or vessel half full of holy water. Holding the little doll in his left hand, he made the sign of the cross over it, and touched it with the holy water on his fingers. As he did so, Léontine, looking up, caught Robin's eyes fixed on her. Half consciously, he raised his hand to his own forehead. And Léontine, with a little gasp of joy, turned and dashed out of the house.

"Take it now, Monsieur Robin," said the priest, holding out the doll. "I have done something very irregular. But—but I should like to think that this Orphan of yours will remind you of the many friends that you have made among my people. Now, again, au revoir. I trust that you will find Madame, your mother, better by the time you reach home."

Robin went out to the calèche. The front rooms of the little house had begun to fill with people. Léontine was talking to a bent, kindly faced old man, who was leaning out of the front window. He waved his hand to Robin, and called after him, "We thank you, Monsieur. *Bonne chance! Bonne chance!*"

"Bonne chance!" "Good luck!" The words were

ringing in Robin's ears as he climbed into the Curé's calèche, while Amyas and Léontine perched on the narrow front seat, just above the horse's flanks.

"They will have Corinne home in half an hour now, Monsieur Robin," said Léontine, twisting round toward the young man. "This house will be shut up again. But there will be someone in the kitchen—waiting."

"Who?" demanded Robin, as a strand of Léontine's hair blew across his cheek. "And why?"

Léontine chuckled contentedly to herself.

"Monsieur le Curé has said that he will give himself the pleasure of waiting in the kitchen—for Eli." She shivered luxuriously. "Mon Dieu, when he sneaks into the back door and finds Monsieur le Curé sitting there, I should not wish to be in the dirty boots of Eli Martel. Almost I could be a little —oh, but only a very little—sorry for Eli."

It was nearly six o'clock when the calèche turned into the Randolphs' road at Cap à l'Ours. During the drive, Robin had had time to wonder what had happened during his three-hour absence, and to reproach himself for having left Anne all alone. He had had time, too, to become a little sentimental over his mother. After all, she could not be—dead. If anything serious had happened, Anne would have scoured both villages for him. But as he drew near the house, he began to listen anxiously. He had left it with his mother's moans and shrieks dinning in his ears. But now, as the calèche crunched up the gravel drive, the house seemed strangely quiet. Twilight was coming on, and there were already lights in the living room. In his mother's room, also. He looked around to speak to Léontine; but she had disappeared. She must have slipped out of the calèche and run up the hill by herself. It was just as well.

Anne came out at the top of the veranda steps.

"I'm sorry to have left you all alone for so long," Robin began. Anne interrupted him. Her voice sounded very tired, and she held herself less erect than usual.

"No matter. It's all over. Oh, is that you, Amyas? What have you two been up to all the afternoon?"

Amyas glanced at Robin. Robin shook his head. No time now for the whole story. Later perhaps.

"Monsieur Robin will tell you, Mademoiselle," said Amyas, making an immense sacrifice, of which Robin knew nothing. For the boy had been looking forward to the excitement of telling his Mademoiselle all the happenings of that wonderful afternoon. And now Monsieur Robin would do all the telling himself. For a moment, Amyas hated him. *"Sacré étranger!"* Then, with a sigh, he lifted the Curé's old whip in salutation to Anne, and drove away.

Anne followed her brother into the living room, where he went to warm his hands in front of the big brick fireplace.

"Well?" he asked, impatiently.

"How well, or how ill, I don't know," said his sister. "By the way, Robin, I'm afraid there's no tea. Léontine simply walked off and left us this afternoon. That was the last straw. I never want to see that girl again. I don't know what we'll do for dinner."

"Oh, cut that all out," Robin answered. He did not mean to be so disagreeable. But really—to speak of Léontine like that was more than he could bear. "What about Mother? I don't see any doctors around; so I suppose everything is all right. Say, Anne, is it a boy or a girl?"

Anne stared up at her brother. He looked rather unusually handsome. She knew that she herself looked fagged and old and ugly. But Robin! Why, he seemed refreshed—younger. It must be the deceptive lights from the fire.

"It *was* a boy," she said, slowly.

"Was? Why, it could only have been born an hour or——"

"Your brother wasn't ever born, Robin, my dear." Then, as if she were repeating a carefully learned lesson, she went on. "The physician feared that Mother's strength was becoming exhausted to the point of actual danger to her life, so they—they 'took' the child—in order to save Mother."

"Oh!" said Robin. "How's Mother?"

"Very greatly exhausted." Anne still spoke as though repeating a series of carefully prepared sentences. "But the doctors have given her something to make her sleep. They think that with care she will recover her strength—fairly soon. We have sent to Quebec for a nurse. She will come on tomorrow's boat."

Robin was conscious of a sudden wave of relief. So his mother wasn't going to die, after all. Poor Mother! She had been in such pain and he had been away all the afternoon! His eyes grew moist.

"Can't I go up and kiss Mother," he asked. Anne shook her head.

Robin began to feel in his pockets for his handkerchief.

"What's that you've just let drop?" asked Anne. She stooped down and picked up a much-battered package wrapped in what had once been smooth tissue paper. Robin snatched for it.

"That's my Orphan," he said. "They just finished redressing it at the Orphelinat. I went there to get it."

Anne laughed good-naturedly. Her brother's sentimentalism, his phobias and adolescent magic always seemed very childish to her. They annoyed her also. She wanted to look up to him, to admire him; and sometimes he made it very hard.

"You think it brings you luck, don't you?

"I don't think anything about it," Robin snarled. When she laughed like that, Anne always made him furious. "I *know* it brings me luck. Only—only, luck can be brought to you that you haven't the sense or the pluck to take." Anne couldn't quite catch these last words. Robin spoke so indistinctly. And that annoyed her still more. Her brother, however, noticed her displeasure. "I'm sorry, Anne," he said, putting his arm about her. "But something happened to me this afternoon. I'll tell you about it later. I'm going to get a drink now. I'm simply dead beat. I'll look into the kitchen, too. Maybe Léontine has come back."

"Then tell her to get out again. I'll scratch up some supper myself."

Robin said nothing. The dining room was dark. He found the whisky bottle in the sideboard; but he could find no glass. He went out into the brightly lighted kitchen.

Léontine, in a spotless white apron, was busy making salad dressing. She was again Mrs. Randolph's kitchen maid.

"You desire, Monsieur Robin?"

"I desire a glass—a long glass, Léontine."

While she was looking for the glass, and rinsing it, Robin wandered about the kitchen. Evidently Léontine had not had time yet to put the place much in order. Stained sheets and strips of linen were lying about. In a far corner, on a window seat, lay a narrow sheet, folded together over something —some lump of soiled towels—or——

Now Robin was very particular about all things that touched his own body.

"Why, that's one of my own new sheets," he said, angrily. "What the deuce have you people been wrapping in it?"

He lifted one corner. There was a big, wide stain of red. Then he lifted the other corner.

Léontine wondered what was the matter with him. For, abruptly, he left the glass, left the whisky bottle standing on the kitchen table, and disappeared.

Anne looked up from the fire as he walked unsteadily into the living room. And Léontine, worried by his sudden disappearance, came from the kitchen a moment later and hovered, listening, in the hall.

"What's the matter, Robin?" asked Anne. She jumped to her feet. "It isn't the whisky again, is it? You haven't had time to——"

Robin put his fingers inside his collar and tried to loosen it.

"In the kitchen—" he said, licking his dry lips—"my sheets—I saw——"

Anne had her arms around him in a second.

"But didn't you know?" she whispered. "Didn't you understand? I told you that they had to 'take' the child."

Robin pushed her arms away. He was thinking of another baby that he had seen that same afternoon—a baby that had wailed for food, and a mother, weak and almost dying, that had given it.

"They manage—" he said, slowly—"they manage these things better in France. No, I'm not crazy, Anne. But I think—I know that I am going to be very sick."

He stumbled away out on the veranda.

Léontine, smoothing her white apron, came into the living room and stood beside Anne.

"I think, perhaps, Mademoiselle," she said, as though she and Anne had parted only a moment before; "I think I boil only one small egg for Monsieur Robin's supper. Only three minutes I boil it. And some dry toast. I make very good toasts, Mademoiselle."

PART III

CHAPTER ONE

Eli Martel

Eli Martel might drink occasionally; he might frequently be a devil; but always he possessed one virtue that no one ever denied him. In dealing with the property of others, he was honest to the point of scrupulosity. And because he himself was never tempted to steal, he was bitterly hard on those who were and who yielded to the temptation.

Just outside the village of Bonne Rivière, on a little hill overlooking the river, stands a square stone house. In the walls of its two stories are set barred windows, the only barred windows in Bonne Rivière. This is the jail. And its chief official is Sylvestre Pednaud, the Sheriff. He does not live in the jail, for he has a trim little house and farm just beyond, on the Forest Road, where he abides with his third wife and the remnants of the three families that he has begotten during the placid years of his long life. Besides being the Sheriff, he is also the owner of the village *pompes funèbres,* the village undertaker. When there is a funeral of *première classe* at the parish church, Sylvestre sits outside perched on the high box of an old black hearse, with a black plumed hat on his head and ribbons of black streaming from his shoulders. The hearse has at its four corners four big black plumes. When they are not in use, these, as well as Sylvestre's hat and streamers, are kept in a box under the bed of Madame Pednaud the Third.

Sylvestre Pednaud and Eli Martel were not very intimate friends, but they respected one another—for business reasons. Because of his well-known honesty and his hatred of thieves in general, Eli had, little by little, created a position for himself during the winter months as guardian of the closed summer cottages of the absent *étrangers*. It was Anne Randolph who had first given to Eli the job of keeping an eye on her mother's cottage, of visiting it once a week from October to May, and of reporting to her by letter any occasional damages or need of repairs. Eli had been glad of this sign of Mademoiselle's confidence, especially the fall after the birth of his third child and only son, for at that time he had seemed discouraged, almost afraid. Robin had opposed his sister's views about Eli; but he gave no reason for his opposition. And Anne, having found Eli to be an excellent guardian during the previous winter, saw no reason for not again employing him. That winter, the Aspinwall cottage was broken into and some damage done. Attempts were made to enter several other closed cottages. But the Randolph house was not touched.

And so, for the next three winters, Eli was entrusted with the guardianship of one cottage after another, until he became a sort of unofficial caretaker, a living insurance against trespassing and theft.

Monsieur le Curé, at Bonne Rivière, was worried about his people at Cap à l'Ours, where all the summer cottages were situated. The Cap à l'Ours habitants were far better off now than the villagers and farmers at Bonne Rivière. The *étrangers* every summer brought them more and more money. Newcomers who had no cottages of their own often rented a habitant house for the season, while the family that owned it camped somewhere on the invisible back premises. The young girls were employed as maids, and the boys caddied on the new links, that had been greatly enlarged. The farmers who lived at some distance started vegetable gardens, or small slaughterhouses, and drove with their wares to the *étrangers'* back doors, especially to those at which they would be likely to meet a cook or a kitchen maid of their own people—perhaps their own cousins or aunts. Life in the winter, or at the beginning of it, had become much easier. There was much less *misère*. The Cap à l'Ours women gave up their spinning wheels, and let their looms rot in the attics. It was so much easier to buy ready-made clothes in the new shops.

But there were drawbacks to all this affluence. The Bonne Rivière people were jealous of Cap à l'Ours. Why should they be forced to pay the same taxes for schools and for church that the Cap à l'Ours people paid, when these last were so much richer than they? Cap à l'Ours had its own school now. It ought to have its own church and its own priest, and not come jingling in new sleighs over to the Bonne Rivière parish church of a winter Sunday strutting up the aisle in ready-made, city clothes and hats, while the Bonne Rivière families were all in clumsy, ill-fitting homespun still. The two neighboring villages were living, during the winter, on different economic levels.

Moreover, the Cap à l'Ours people had come to look upon the *étrangers* and their cottages as though they belonged to Cap à l'Ours and to no one else. In the summers the young men who worked as gardeners or as drivers were constantly in the cottages; they knew every room of them. When the long winter months came, when most of their money had been spent and they were all bored besides, what was more natural than to desire to have a look at these same rooms; to walk through these same deserted cottages; to hunt out the locked closet where Madame Aspinwall kept her whisky, and to sit down at her dining-room table to drink up whatever the family might have left behind; to borrow Monsieur Robin's rifle, or the field glasses of old Colonel Blake. It was so easy to take down one of the big wooden shutters that covered the windows. Besides, almost all the cottages stood on a ridge above the village. Nothing except the cottage roofs was visible from the village street below.

No wonder Monsieur le Curé was worried. In the winter, it took him nearly an hour to drive to Cap à l'Ours, and he lost touch with the people there. And so, one winter afternoon, he wrote a long letter to Monseigneur, the Bishop, at Chicoutimi. If it were possible, Cap à l'Ours should be made a parish by itself, he wrote. It had already a little wooden church, but this was used only during the summer. The right kind of priest ought to be able to build a new one of brick or stone. The people had money enough. But Monseigneur would have to send the right kind of man, for Cap à l'Ours was out of hand; it had waxed fat and prosperous; and it was kicking against discipline and order.

Consequently, when Anne Randolph came back for her seventh summer at Cap à l'Ours—having written as usual of her coming to her friend, the Mother Superior of the Orphelinat—she was met on the dock by Amyas, now a wiry, awkward youth of eighteen, who introduced to her a young priest, with black hair, a powerful, tight jaw, and deep, kindly, brown eyes—a priest who spoke to her in a rather soft, low voice, but in such perfect, such carefully enunciated French that Anne set him down at once as an importation from Europe.

"Monsieur le Curé of Bonne Rivière is grieved that he could not be here to meet Mademoiselle, as in years past," he said, clasping his flat felt hat to his breast with both hands. "He has been unwell—suffering——"

"It is because he is always trying to doctor suffering animals, Mademoiselle," interposed Amyas. He seemed to have grown shy, ungainly. He did not meet Anne's eyes squarely and with a friendly grin as he had used to do. "He had a cut on his hand when he was working over Madame Fortain's old cow. Now there is a swelling under his arm. And the doctor says——"

"Hush, Amyas," said the young priest. He spoke softly enough. But Amyas' lips came together immediately.

"Anthrax," thought Anne. But she said nothing, except that she would hope to see Monsieur le Curé very soon.

But that summer proved a very busy, a very gay, one. Not until August did Anne have a chance to visit the Presbytère at Bonne Rivière. And then she found her old friend looking so ill, so worn, that she was shocked. He reassured her, however. The doctors said that he must go to Quebec in September for an operation. After that he would be himself again. And would she come with him now to the Orphelinat? The Mother Superior was complaining that she and Sister Onésime had seen so little of Mademoiselle this summer. He had heard that Monsieur Robin had been studying law, and was now in Europe. Would she remember them all to him when she wrote? He himself had always had a great regard for Monsieur Robin.

Anne did not go to the Orphelinat again that summer. In the first place, she missed Robin. He and she had always visited the place together. Moreover, she was very busy. She did all the housekeeping now. Since that hideous night, three summers ago, Mrs. Randolph had never been well. At least, she thought so. And she blamed her husband for her wretched condition. She had grown exacting and querulous; an habitual invalid who demanded to be the center of the family's care and attention. This summer she had been more difficult than ever. Colonel Randolph came up to Cap à l'Ours as usual for his two-week holiday. But his wife was constantly complaining of his lack of interest in her condition. Eventually she made the cottage so uncomfortable for him that Anne could not blame her father if he spent a great deal of his time at Bouchards, the little hotel. Anne knew whom he went to see there. But what was the use of making a row? She had too much to do. She was playing better golf this summer than ever before. She knew that she could win the women's tournament for the fifth time without any difficulty. Moreover, a very good-looking young Englishman had turned up at Cap à l'Ours, a former Rhodes scholar, whom Robin had known at Princeton. He was a golfer after her own heart. And she got a mild, perverse pleasure out of making Henry Aspinwall jealous. Henry had given up trying to study law, and was a reporter now on a Toronto newspaper. He was writing a book, a novel. But he was duller than usual this summer. And his golf was wretched beyond words.

Anne saw very little of her habitant friends. Corinne, very thin and tiny, with strands of gray already in her brown hair, was still the stand-by of the Randolph household. And Léontine, grown to be a rather sulky, uninteresting woman, waited on the table and made the beds. As for Amyas, Anne scarcely saw him at all. He was far too old for the orphanage now; too old to caddie any more. For the past two years he had been living with Sylvestre Pednaud, the Sheriff. He looked after the horses, and drove the small white hearse at children's funerals. In the winter he went into the logging camps with the older men.

"He is one of the few boys," the Mother Superior had said to Anne on her last visit to the Orphelinat "who has not been coarsened and hurt in his immortal soul by living with those swearing, drinking men in the woods. Many of them do not come from our villages at all. But Amyas, when he returns to us from the logging camp goes straight back to serving Monsieur le Curé at high mass on Sundays. Monsieur le Curé and I hope that God may call him to the priesthood."

Amyas, himself, might have been surprised to hear this. Of course it was the most wonderful thing in the world to be a priest. But he had never thought of himself as one. He was too busy in Pednaud's stable, too tired at night with working on the farm. Besides, Pednaud had rented his light *planche,* a kind of small buckboard, to Colonel Blake for the summer, and Amyas drove the Colonel to golf every morning and Madame le Colonel on a round of visits every other afternoon. But on the afternoon of the women's finals in the golf tournament, he told Mrs. Blake that he felt very ill—"mal au ventre" he said—so that he could not drive. And he followed the players at the very fringe of the gallery, keeping one eye on his Mademoiselle, who was not putting so well as usual, and the other on Colonel Blake, who was umpiring the match. When his Mademoiselle beat her opponent, Mrs. Fletcher, from Chicago, a newcomer that year and in Amyas' opinion an "upstart," two up and one to go, Amyas slipped away. He was glad that she had won; and yet he felt so depressed that he wanted to cry. Why couldn't he have carried her clubs, and stood close to her, watching her drive, the way he used to do? Now he had to look on from a distance while that pug-dog-nosed Marcel Thybaut caddied for her. He would tell Marcel what he thought of his caddying. Outrageous, to stand so close to Mademoiselle that she could see the caddie's feet and be deranged in her play!

That was not a very happy summer for anyone, although Anne seemed fairly satisfied during the days that she and Corinne were closing the house after Mrs. Randolph and the younger girls had been sent on ahead by the Tuesday morning boat, to wait for Anne and to rest in Montreal before the long railway journey southward. On the last afternoon, a cold, clear afternoon in September, when the air from the Laurentian hills was even more stimulating than any sparkling Burgundy—the wine that Anne loved most—Anne stood at the foot of the veranda steps, looking out at the St. Lawrence. It was so clear that one could see the farther shore. The luggage had all gone down to the dock, where the summer residents that were left would be gathering to bid her good-by. Henry Aspinwall would be there, of course. It would not please him to find out that the young Englishman was going on the boat with Anne, and not staying for another week, after all.

"Here comes the calèche, Mademoiselle," said Corinne, behind her. "And here is Eli, come to wish you *bonne chance* until next year."

Anne let Eli pile her hand luggage into the calèche. She shook hands with Corinne. Then she turned to Eli.

"Here, Eli," she said. "Here is the key of the back door. You can get in most easily that way if you need to do so. And keep your eyes open. You did so well last year, having that leak in the roof mended in time and getting my garden planted, that I'm going to give you more money this winter. But if anyone breaks in, if any things are stolen—well, I don't say that I'll make you pay for them, but next summer I'll have to cut down your pay. So it's up to you. I don't want to come back here next June and find muddy footsteps all over the living room floor, and the storeroom raided. I'm leaving quite a lot of tinned stuff in the big closet under the stairs, where the guns and the fishing rods are. There's some whisky there, too. Nobody used much this year. Monsieur Robin——" She hesitated; blushed uneasily. "We had no man in the house this summer."

Eli put the key in his pocket with great solemnity. He loved being a keeper of other people's property. It made him feel extremely important.

"Mademoiselle may be quite at ease," he said. "This winter I shall have eleven cottages to watch over. Three more than last year. People know, Mademoiselle, that I am to be trusted. But if I had two hundred to guard, no one should ever break into *this* house. Even supposing they should try to do so, my friend, Monsieur Pednaud, the Sheriff, and myself, we would have them safe behind the bars of the jail for Mademoiselle to look at when she returns next June. Last year I caught two. Even now I know one family that ought to be in jail, every one of them. Only I have no proof. They made fun of me last winter, Mademoiselle. Called me '*l'ange gardien.*' But this year——"

"Eli, you are detaining Mademoiselle," Corinne interrupted. Eli glared at her. She shrank back, putting up her hand a little, as though to ward off an expected blow. "Listen! *Le bateau crie!*" (The boat is whistling.) "In five minutes it will be at the dock. Make haste, Mademoiselle!"

Anne jumped into the calèche, and the horse trotted down the long gravel road to the village street. At the turn, Anne looked back. Corinne was still waving to her from the veranda. But Eli had disappeared.

Anne, listening to her friends singing, "Au revoir mes amis, au revoir," as the boat pulled out, had no idea that Eli had dashed around the house to seize roughly by the shoulder a youth who was lurking in the bushes behind the tennis court.

"What the devil are you doing here?"

"Let me go, Eli. That's none of your business. I'm not doing any harm, am I?"

"I don't know about that. Don't I see you hanging round the village with that good-for-nothing Ulysse Lajoie? He's the worst of a bad family."

"Ulysse is my friend. Just because he once made a mistake and had to go to a reform school, why should everyone——"

"You'll go to a reform school yourself if you don't look out. Now get out of here. And don't let me find you hanging around this house during the winter. You've no reason to be here now. What did you want, anyway?"

"None of your business."

Not for gold untold would Amyas have let Eli Martel know why he had been hiding in the bushes, to get one glimpse of his Mademoiselle as she drove off to the dock. As he walked away from Eli, he heard the *bateau crier* again. That was the last whistle. He waited, halfway down the Randolph road. Let Eli watch him if he wanted to.

Soon, over the top of the pine trees along the shore, he saw the black funnel, and then the white hull of the old side-wheeler. The afternoon sun beat down on her rough decks and lighted up her ancient hull until it all shone like burnished metal. She turned, rolled a little to and fro on the current, and then swung around, away from Cap à l'Ours itself, a long arm of green that jutted out into the river.

As she passed slowly out of sight, Amyas waved his cap.

"À l'année prochaine, Mademoiselle," he murmured under his breath. Then, turning back toward the cottage, where Eli still stood, staring after him suspiciously, Amyas spat on the ground. "And to hell with you!" he said.

Meanwhile, on the veranda of the Randolphs' cottage, Eli had turned to his wife with a satisfied grin on his thin lips.

"Thanks to the good God, they are gone," he said. "Maintenant c'est la saison de notre repos."

CHAPTER TWO

La Famille Lajoie

EVERY autumn, as soon as the last of the *étrangers* had been carried away by the rolling little side-wheeler, the life of the people at Cap à l'Ours, that had been distorted and feverish during the summer, returned to a normal level. Families that had been living in their own backyards, because they had rented the house in front, moved back into their own quarters. The gay pictures, the engravings, that had been hung on the bare walls by the summer visitors, gave place to the old garish prints—the Pope and Laurier. Every one counted up the money he or she had made during the summer, and sat back comfortably in the new chairs that Mrs. Smith or Mrs. Jones had bought to "make the living room a little less dreary." Almost every family inherited something from the *étrangers*—clothes that the young men had not cared to carry away—odds and ends from different kitchens. It was all very pleasant for a little while. And the autumn weather, before the snow came, was always clear and stimulating, the very best part of the whole year.

The summer cottages were boarded up and locked, one after another. But Eli, who was now in charge of a dozen houses, did not begin to make his weekly tour of inspection until the snow came. There was no danger of anyone breaking in just yet. Everyone seemed happy. It was, indeed, as Eli said, "la saison de notre repos," the time of their reward.

The Bergerons gave an evening party, a *veillée,* at their house in the village. In the room in which Mrs. Saunderson Graham of Buffalo had given her tea parties and had played bridge with her most intimate friends, the friends of the Bergerons ate heavily of stewed veal, and *"gigued"*, or danced their square, old-fashioned dances until the floor creaked beneath them. Then Pontfile Riveron, who lived a mile up the river and who had made a great deal of money from his vegetables, had a party in his house; a party that lasted till long after midnight, and at which Pontfile had a fight with young Ratté, that lent a pleasing excitement to the entertainment.

Amyas Dufour had little to do. There were no funerals. The horses of his master, Sheriff Pednaud, that had been rented during the summer, were more or less idle, except for a little work on the farm. Occasionally, Amyas looked in at the Orphelinat. But it was no longer the tumble-down place that he had loved, for during the past summer a new building had been put up, a building of very red, respectable brick, that had a real bell in a little turret on the roof, and a little chapel for the nuns. Sister Onésime showed Amyas all over it. But he did not care for it very greatly. It was all too new, too shiny. He stood for a moment, looking at the statue of his old friend, Saint Anthony. But even Saint Anthony did not look quite the same. He had been given a new coat of paint, and the names of the *Bienfaiteurs* at the foot of his pedestal had been all done over in gold lettering. Still, there stood the names of his Mademoiselle and of Monsieur Robin, at the head of the list. Amyas stretched out his hand when Sister Onésime was not looking and touched the two familiar names. Then he went away, back to Monsieur Pednaud, to his third wife, and to the *pompes funèbres* under her bed.

Of Monsieur le Curé, too, he saw very little. The priest was very sick, people said; and was going in November to the hospital at Quebec. While he was gone, the new Curé at Cap à l'Ours, Monsieur Bienvenu, was to help out with the masses at Bonne Rivière. But Amyas had not taken very kindly to this young priest, who spoke such careful, perfect French. So, his two former haunts, the Orphelinat and the Presbytère at Bonne Rivière, saw him very seldom.

Because he was unhappy, because he had few friends of his own age, and perhaps because Eli Martel, whom he hated, had warned him against these very people, Amyas came to see more and more of young Ulysse Lajoie and his family.

The Lajoies were supposed to have Indian blood in their veins. And it was a matter of common belief that all of them had *le cœur noir;* they had black hearts. That meant that they were not quite respectable, that they were, in some strange sense, outlaws; and that all decent, God-fearing people were afraid of them. If an *étranger,* who had been into the woods with old Joseph Lajoie and had been fascinated with the way in which the old man could handle a canoe or cast a fly, asked some Cap à l'Ours habitant "what the Lajoies had ever done anyway to make people so down on them," the only answer he ever got was a shrug of the shoulders and a few mumbled words about Indians and black hearts. There was a story that old Lajoie had once knifed a man over a game of cards, a man who had been caught with four aces up his sleeve. And it was whispered also that his wife had married Joseph while she had another husband living. It was admitted that this same husband had robbed and deserted her, that he had been dead these past twenty years; but still there had been a time during which old Lajoie and his wife had been living in open sin. Moreover, the young Lajoie girls—dark, lithe, powerful women—had never been members of the "Daughters of Mary," to which all nice girls in the parish belonged. It was suggested that they could not become members, since they lacked the one fundamental virginal element necessary for their introduction into that respectable group of young maidens. As for young Ulysse Lajoie, everyone knew that he had been a ne'er-do-well all his life.

He had been suspended from the links as a caddie over and over again, for stealing balls. He had run away from home repeatedly; and no one ever knew where he had been during his absences. Finally, several members of the golf club had had money stolen from their lockers. Ulysse had been seen hanging about the back of the club house, and the Caddie Master, Nerron, a fat, pompous personage, had openly accused him of the theft. Ulysse had lost his temper, he had drawn a knife, and Nerron had been lucky to escape with nothing worse than a bad cut in his fat flank. He should have remembered that Ulysse had a black heart. It was not wise to anger people who had *le cœur noir*. Better let them alone. Or let the Sheriff or the district judge deal with them. But Nerron had pushed the case against the young man. And Ulysse had gone off for a year to a reform school near Quebec. A month before he was released, Nerron resigned as caddie master, and moved across the river to Gaspé. People thought he was wise.

All this and much more had been poured into Amyas' ears. And he had kept a quiet watch for Ulysse when he reappeared, just at the beginning of the past summer. No one saw him come home from the reform school. But by the time people began to mention having seen him on the road or sitting on the porch of his father's house, Amyas had been so often warned against him, especially by the sheriff and Eli Martel, that he became more and more interested in the young outlaw. Besides, everyone was so unfair to Ulysse. He could not get work anywhere. The *étrangers,* too, had been warned against him.

In August the Randolphs had their tennis court re-made. Mademoiselle Anne asked Amyas to find her a man who would roll the court every day for the roller was too heavy for Amyas himself. With his heart in his mouth, Amyas walked along the river road, about half a mile beyond Sheriff Pednaud's farm, up to the tumble-down, disreputable shanty that had for generations belonged to the family Lajoie. He found Ulysse just where he expected, sitting on the tipped-up, broken little veranda that ran around the house, on a three-legged chair tilted back against the wall. He was smoking the strongest of home-grown tobacco and scratching the head of one of the countless mongrels that lived under the house and yelped at every passerby. They yelped and snapped at Amyas, but he paid no attention to them.

He stood in front of Ulysse Lajoie, staring at him as if trying to discover some outward symptoms of his black heart. Ulysse was only a young man, apparently three or four years older than Amyas himself—a young man who had not shaved for a week, and whose lank, black hair dropped down in wisps from beneath a torn gray-felt hat. The brim of the hat hid his eyes. All that Amyas could see was the large, full-lipped mouth, stained at the corners with tobacco.

"Bonjour, Ulysse."

"What the hell do you want?" Ulysse preferred the English that he had learned on his various wanderings, especially when he wished to be particularly offensive. Besides, you can swear better in English than in French.

"I come to ask you a favor," said Amyas. Instinctively, he knew that if he offered this cocky personage a job, it would be instantly refused. The young outlaw would suspect some trap, some source of later humiliation. "Mademoiselle Randolph for whom I work in the summer time is making a new place to play this tennis game. It has to be made flat with a big iron roller. But the iron roller is too heavy. I cannot move it. I get one dollar a week. Three rollings a week. If you would help me, I would give you fifty cents—perhaps seventy-five——"

Ulysse pushed the brim of his hat back from his face. Amyas found himself staring into two piercing black eyes; eyes that looked to him a little filmy—like the eyes of a dog that is in pain.

"Work for me? A job?" he said, dropping into French. "Is that what you mean?" He remembered Amyas in a dim way, as one of the younger caddies, when he himself had been suspended from the links.

Amyas nodded.

"You could have the whole rolling job. I got other work. You do it early in the morning—before Eli Martel gets there. Then he won't——"

But at the mention of Eli's name, Ulysse's lips parted in such a sneer of suppressed rage that Amyas, for a moment, had an impulse to turn and run away. Yet he held on.

While he waited, Ulysse seemed to be slowly making up his mind. He was standing up now, staring down at the lanky, overgrown boy below him.

"No. I will not hide. Not from Eli or from anyone else. If you'll get me the job, I'll take it."

Amyas nodded. At the moment, he felt rather hopeless. For if Eli saw Ulysse, there would be no rolling of the tennis court. He had, however, one source of hope that had never failed him yet—his Mademoiselle. Trusting in her, he would take a chance, a long chance. Yet if, instead of helping Ulysse, he only humiliated him, then Amyas might find out what it meant to have a black heart.

"All right," Amyas said, in some trepidation, but as firmly as he could. "You come to the kitchen door of Mademoiselle Randolph's cottage tomorrow morning. I'll be there. Au revoir."

He hurried away, down the river road, past his work at Sheriff Pednaud's, that was waiting for him, straight through Bonne Rivière, and along the shore to Cap à l'Ours. At the golf club he found his Mademoiselle, sitting on the bench at the first tee, waiting her turn to drive. He dared to push through the crowd of caddies, to come behind the fence against which the bench was placed, to bend over and whisper in her ear.

"One moment," said Anne to Henry Aspinwall who was standing on the tee. "Let the pair behind us drive off. I've something to say to Amyas."

It was wonderful, Amyas thought, how easily she understood. A *personne de confiance,* she was; someone on whom you could always depend.

"Never mind Eli," she said; "I've heard about Ulysse Lajoie, and I'm sick and tired of the way he's been treated. Of course he can have the job. Tell him to come to the house tomorrow and to ask for me."

And in this way, the friendship between Amyas and Ulysse had begun. In spite of remonstrances from all sides, from the habitants as well as from the summer visitors, Anne Randolph had insisted on giving work to Ulysse Lajoie. She had no personal interest in him, as she had in Amyas; it was only her sense of justice that determined her to give the young man something to do. Eli warned her; so did Corinne, in all seriousness. It was unwise to let a member of the Lajoie family inside one of the summer cottages. They saw too much. Mrs. Aspinwall had once had one of the Lajoie girls to do some cleaning when her regular cleaning woman was ill, and that winter the Aspinwall cottage had been broken into, and Monsieur Henry had lost his favorite rifle, besides a lot of other things. Then there was Colonel Blake who had had old Joseph Lajoie in his room while they were packing up for a fishing trip; and in the winter that cottage also had been entered, and the Colonel had lost those expensive field glasses of his. And so it went; so it had gone, for the past five or six years, ever since English Canadians and the Americans had begun to build summer cottages. Why was it that so few of the stolen things were ever recovered, although Monsieur le Curé had read lists of them in the parish church and had exhorted the guilty persons to restore the stolen property. Everyone knew that the Lajoies hardly ever came to church—except at Christmas and Easter. Everybody suspected them. But no one could ever prove anything against them. They were bad people; they were dangerous; they had black hearts.

Anne had not paid much attention to all this. She knew how unjust her habitant friends often were if they once took a prejudice against anyone. Old Madame Lajoie seemed a dear, fat, kindly old soul. The girls were good-looking even if they were rather forward. And as for old Joseph himself, he was a fisherman by the Grace of God. She had never seen anyone cast a fly as he did. While as for Ulysse—well, "give a dog a bad name and hang him." Besides, she was only giving Ulysse a little work on the tennis court and in the garden. He had a rather gentle and understanding way of caring for flowers. And finally, there was that awful mongrel of his, that he called "Mille Vaches." He and the dog were devoted to one another. A man who loved a dog couldn't be really bad. Anyway, Ulysse Lajoie was going to work on the Randolph place, no matter what anyone said or did. And she preferred not to have the thing discussed again.

Now, however, Mademoiselle Anne and her family had all gone back to their home in "The States"; the other cottages were all closed; the "*saison de notre repos*" was in full swing. And Amyas was coming to see more and more of Ulysse Lajoie. He was beginning to admire him; to look up to him; to give him that silent adoration that the younger man so often pays to his first hero.

In October and November it was dull of an evening, sitting in the Pednaud kitchen while Madame Pednaud read the *Courrier of the Sacred Heart* and rocked with one foot the cradle of her latest born, the Sheriff's eighteenth offspring. So Amyas would often slip away, pretending that he was tired and was going to his room over the stable. It was easy to hurry up the road, in the moonlight, and in fifteen minutes he would be sitting with the Lajoies, listening to old Joseph's stories of the logging camps in the old days, or to the new talking machine that Mélanie Lajoie had just bought, second hand, from Mrs. Aspinwall's Toronto cook. When it was time for him to leave, Ulysse would give him a drink of "whisky blanc" and would walk back with him to the Pednauds', telling him tales of the Reform School and of the interesting men he had met in Montreal, and farther south in the States, men who did not have to work but who made money, lots of money, in ways of their own. And Amyas would climb up to his bare little room, wrap himself in his rather thin blanket, and fall asleep to the sound of the horses champing and stamping in the stable below, to dream of those fascinating men in the States and elsewhere—the men who made money—lots of it—in ways of their own—and who never had to work.

By the end of November came the first snow. Soon the fields were covered, the roads blotted out, and the houses buried almost up to the second stories. The *"saison de notre repos"* came to an abrupt end. People had to settle down to winter habits, to winter work. At Cap à l'Ours the new Curé was insisting that the women should set up the spinning wheels again, or at least their looms, instead of sitting placidly by their fires in between the cooking of meals, existing on the money they had made during the summer. He was often at Bonne Rivière, also; for Monsieur le Curé Hervey had at last gone off to Quebec for the operation that was to make him entirely well again—so old Doctor Lapointe said, who went with him all the way to Quebec and drove back, just in time, before the first heavy snow.

The men began to talk about the logging camps. There were three or four big ones between Bonne Rivière and Chicoutimi, and the agents were getting anxious over the appearance of the men who had promised themselves earlier in the autumn. In groups, the fathers of families—the younger men from twenty to forty—were leaving the village.

They always took with them some of the stronger boys. Amyas had been with them the year before. It had been hard work, and bitterly cold. The boys were the servants of the camp. They did all the odd jobs; walked endless miles on snow-shoes to get fresh provisions, and were often kicked and smacked if they did not return quickly enough, no matter how heavy were the packs that they had to carry on their narrow shoulders or drag on sleds in the snow behind them. But Amyas had done well. This winter he was among the first of the older boys who were asked to go into the woods. He wanted the money. It would be needed by spring, for he must have some clothes for summer when his Mademoiselle came back again.

But this winter was so different from last. Then, he had been glad of the change—glad to get away from the dull winter routine of petty chores with the Pednaud family. This winter, however, he did not want to leave very much. He would miss Ulysse, and the rest of the Lajoie family, too. Stephanie Lajoie was always teasing him, tickling him, and pretending that he had tried to kiss her. It was rather amusing. And now, to go miles up into the woods, to live in a camp house, where the air was stifling and foul, to be kicked about and ordered around, and made to run errands! It was not at all like those men about whom Ulysse talked so much, and of whom Amyas himself dreamed so frequently, the men who never had to work.

At first Amyas thought that perhaps Ulysse would go with him into the woods. He was strong enough. And in the camps people weren't so particular about a man's past if he could wield an ax.

But Ulysse only laughed. What was the use of working yourself to death in a logging camp? Cap à l'Ours was much more interesting. So Amyas told Madame Pednaud that he would not go into the woods; and she was greatly pleased. After all, Amyas was always useful about the place. Later on, too, there would surely be many funerals and her husband would need help, especially if the black hearse and the little white one had to go out on the same day. But Amyas knew that Monsieur le Curé of Bonne Rivière, had he been at home, would have packed him off to the logging camp in short order. It was just as well, therefore, that the Curé was in a hospital in Quebec. Monsieur Bienvenu, the new priest at Cap à l'Ours, did not know Amyas well enough to keep him out of trouble's way; as for the Mother Superior and Sister Onésime at the Orphelinat, they had more than enough to do in feeding, teaching, and warming fifteen orphan boys. Besides, Amyas kept away from them. They would suppose, naturally, that he had gone into the woods. Léontine was too absorbed in helping Corinne with her babies to bother much about her brother. And so it came about that Amyas was allowed to go his own way, and in going it, to walk blindly into disaster and disgrace.

CHAPTER THREE

Monsieur le Shérif

A few days after the Feast of the Epiphany, Monsieur le Shérif Pednaud was sitting in his little office in the jail. He plodded there through the deep snow every morning, not because he had any business to transact, but because it was quieter, less noisy in the jail than in his own home, with the numerous offspring of his third wife cluttering up the floor. But ever since Maxime Michaud, who had been serving six months for assault (with a knife) on his brother-in-law, had left, the jail had been almost too quiet for the Sheriff. He had not a single prisoner. Usually, when one or two of the cells were full, the Sheriff had someone to keep him company. If the weather were bad, he would unlock the cells and let the prisoners sweep out his office. He prided himself upon his humane treatment of his charges. If he liked a man, why he would let him sit down beside him, and they would smoke and talk together, or amuse themselves with a game of cards. In good weather, when there was not too much snow, he would send a prisoner down the road and across the bridge, up to his own place; for there was always work to be done on the Pednaud farm, and what was the use of letting a good strong man lie idle just because he happened to be in jail?

"Run away?" said the Sheriff once to an inquiring *étranger*. "Why, where would they run to? And besides, they have no money. Oh, they always come back to the jail in the evening. There is food there and it is warm. Sometimes when I have a funeral and cannot get to the jail of an evening, I let the prisoners lock themselves in. They push the key of their cells out under the door. I find it there in the morning."

Just at present, however, the Sheriff had no one to talk to. He looked forward to rather a dull winter, unless something unusual happened. Of course if he could arrest anyone, that man would have to stay in jail until the district judge came in April, to hold court. Only, it did not do to make arrests without some decent excuse. Last winter, for instance, when that no-good cousin of his had buried his young wife and had no home to go to, the Sheriff had arrested him on a drunk-and-disorderly charge, and had given him comfortable quarters in the jail for three months. But there had been trouble in the end. When the judge came, he had looked very strangely at the Sheriff after this prisoner, charged on the books as drunk and disorderly, had called six witnesses to prove that he never touched a drop but had taken a Total Abstinence pledge two years ago before Monsieur le Curé of Saint Agnès. The Sheriff had kicked him out of the jail door after his acquittal. He had abused the Sheriff's hospitality. But that was always what happened if one tried to be decent to the cousins of one's first wife. She had been a dumb woman anyway. Her relations were dumb, too.

No prisoners—no funerals; and snow covering everything. No one to mend the fire in the little iron stove in his office. Pednaud got up, grumbling, to feed the fire himself. As he did so, a step sounded in the hall outside. Eli Martel, in thick short trousers tucked into high soleless boots, and buttoned up to the neck in a heavy double-breasted homespun jacket, was coming through the hall, kicking one foot against the other in order to shake off the snow. As he came to the door of the Sheriff's office, he tugged off his thick felt cap with its long red-lined ear tabs, and beat his hands together in his fur-lined gloves.

"Bonjour, Monsieur le Gardien," said the Sheriff. Eli had no such legal title, but after all he did keep an eye on the summer cottages at Cap à l'Ours; and the Sheriff had an idea that he might have come on a welcome matter of business.

"Salut, Monsieur le Shérif," Eli answered. "What a cold!"

The Sheriff nodded, closed the door of the little iron stove, and drew up another chair for his visitor.

"I was passing—merely by chance," said Eli. "I thought I would drop in for a moment." He dragged out his pipe from one pocket and stuffed it with home-grown tobacco from another. Then he glanced slowly around the room. "No prisoners, I see."

"No. Just at the moment our Little Inn for the Unfortunate is empty. But I have hopes. There will be a fight or two soon, after the young men get fed up with being cooped in the houses. I hear, too, that since Monsieur le Curé is in Quebec, someone is selling whisky at the old place on the Quebec road. Oh, I shall have company soon!"

Eli had been glancing out of the barred window of the little office that looked out on the main road in front of the jail, and beyond it to the frozen river and the huddled groups of snow-covered houses along its banks.

"You will have company soon, indeed," he said, pointing through the window with the stem of his pipe. "Distinguished company, too."

The Sheriff joined him and looked over his shoulder.

"A-ha, Monsieur le Seigneur de Mont Sainte Marie," he snickered. "Now what foolish wind blows that foolish young man to us? My God, but the old Seigneur must turn over in his grave if he can see what a mess this new man has made of everything. Been here—how long? Three or four years, isn't it? And he's managed to rub his tenants the wrong way, to make trouble for himself everywhere. Why, the income from the Seigneurie lands must be dwindling to almost nothing."

He and Eli had been watching a sleigh, drawn by two horses, that was now standing in the road outside. A man was trying to force the horses to stand quietly while he got out. He was jerking at their mouths, either unable to quiet them or else understanding very little about the driving of horses. Finally, the boy who sat beside him jumped out and ran to the horses' heads. The man got out also. He wore a rather gorgeous fur coat—the kind that tourists in Quebec buy from the big fur shops there—with a high, cloth collar, and with crossing braided chevrons down the front, instead of buttons. His fur cap, carefully indented in the exact center, was set a little over his right ear. Below his tightly cut trousers appeared light yellow shoes, that slipped and slithered along the frozen snow. And he carried a stick—with a silver crooked handle.

But as he came up the path, Eli's sharp eyes saw how old and frayed was the fur on the coat sleeve. The cloth of the coat itself was ragged and torn in two or three places. Several chevrons had come off; one had been fastened in its place with a piece of white string. And the fur cap, that was set so jauntily on one side, had brown spots on it, where the fur had been worn away.

Nevertheless, this was "The Seigneur." And in the little office, Eli and the Sheriff rose to their feet respectfully enough as the man came through the hall. He peered about, fumbled inside his coat, and at last produced a pair of *pince-nez,* which he tried vainly to set in place with his gloved hands. Then he caught sight of the Sheriff and came directly into the office.

"Good morning, Sheriff," he said, in English, with a side glance at Eli, to whom he paid not the least attention. He had seen him a thousand times; but did not know his name. And anyway, as he so often said to his friends among the summer visitors, all these French Canadians looked alike to him. "I have come about a small legal matter that is, I believe, in your province."

Now Pednaud spoke English excellently well. As a young man he had spent several years in a New England factory town. But he often concealed this proficiency. So he answered in French.

"Monsieur le Seigneur knows that I am at his service, always. Will not the Seigneur sit down?"

The young man shook his head impatiently. He had taken off one glove and kept fingering his little brown mustache. Pednaud, meanwhile, was watching the Seigneur's eyes, and he caught there a look of puzzled confusion and of hopeless unhappiness that suddenly appealed to him. He, who prided himself on reading men's eyes rather than their faces, had seen that look often enough among his compatriots in that same New England village, men who had wandered into a strange community, who had become confused by unfamiliar standards, unfamiliar speech, and who were homesick—deathly homesick for their own country and their own people. So a new tone came into the Sheriff's voice, a tone that rather surprised Eli, as he listened to the conversation—English on one side, French on the other, but a French that was spoken not rapidly, as though to confuse an opponent, but very slowly and distinctly, as though the speaker were anxious to set someone at his ease.

"I want you to arrest Michel Bouillane," the Seigneur began.

"Bouillane? But, Monsieur—why? I cannot arrest——"

"Then dispossess him. Turn him out of his farm." The Laird was beginning to speak angrily. The hand that fingered his brown mustache was shaking a little. "He has paid no rent for a year. I have talked with him. But he pretends that he does not understand. I had someone—my secretary—write to him in French. But he said that he could not read."

The Sheriff put up his hand to hide a smile. His "secretary!" The secretary meant little Madame Pilote, the postmistress, at Cap à l'Ours, who gave lessons in English during the winter, and in summer French lessons to the *étrangers*.

"Something must be done!" The Laird's voice rose to a shrill note of indignant complaint. "Bouillane must be made to pay—or he must leave his farm. An example must be made. If I let him stay on without paying, the other tenants will behave in the same way. Things cannot go on like this. The law must help me—the law——"

In his excitement, the *pince-nez* slipped from his nose and fell to the floor. The Laird pounced upon them, and held them up. One of the glasses had broken clear across. He stared at it, helplessly. For a moment it seemed to Eli as if he were going to cry, as if this were the last straw in a load of misfortune that was too heavy for him to bear.

"My only pair!" he muttered, staring at the broken glass. "How shall I read now in the evenings——"

Eli took the glasses, quietly, almost tenderly, out of the Laird's hands. There was something so helpless, so hopeless about the man. No one—at least, no French-speaking Canadian—could help wanting to do something for him.

"Do not be disturbed, Monsieur," said Eli, softly. "My cousin goes to Quebec, overland, tomorrow morning. By the end of this week he will be back—if the roads are decent. Put these broken glasses in an envelope and the money to pay for them. My cousin will bring you back new ones. But you had better order two pairs." He took an envelope from the Sheriff's desk and thrust it into the Laird's hand.

The young man suddenly blushed to the very roots of his hair. He began to fumble again with his mustache.

"Oh, I could not put you to so much trouble," he said, in a rather uncertain voice. "Besides, perhaps I can mend these. Or else"—he made a pitiful attempt at a smile—"or else I can learn to read with one eye."

Then he got slowly to his feet.

"Mister Sheriff," he said, tugging on his gloves, "could you not speak to Bouillane yourself? You have, I know, great influence. And there are one or two others——"

The Sheriff bowed.

"I will do my best, Monsieur le Seigneur," he answered. "But never, during the life of the late Monsieur, your uncle, was there an eviction on this Seigneurie. The people will pay if you do not anger them or press them too much. Last winter was a hard one for the Bouillanes. Their barn burned down; they lost all their cattle. But they are honest people at bottom. Only, they do not always understand you. And, forgive me if I speak somewhat plainly, perhaps you do not understand them. They believe that you are rich; so rich compared with themselves. They cannot see why you should press them for a few hundred *piastres*, when you yourself have so many. The law—oh, yes—the law would help you to make them pay or leave their farm. But then, they would believe, not only that you were a hard rich man, but that you were a cruel, an unjust man, also."

The Seigneur stared for a moment at the Sheriff. Then he burst out in high-pitched, nervous laughter.

"Rich?" he stammered. "Me? Me—a cruel—hard—rich man! Oh, my God!"

And off he hurried, slipping and stumbling down the icy path that led from the door of the jail to his waiting sleigh.

The Sheriff looked after him from the office window, saw him snatch at the reins, cut angrily with his whip at the restive horses, and go dashing up the road, the light sleigh bumping and swerving from one deep rut to another.

"He will kill himself—or his horses—some day, if he drives like that," muttered the Sheriff. Then he turned to Eli, who had gone back to his place by the stove.

"Did you understand, Monsieur le Shérif?" Eli asked. "He did not have enough ready money to send to Quebec for a new pair of glasses. And yet the old Seigneur did himself very well. Do you know what I think? I think that this young man needs someone—someone honest—who would collect his rents—for a small commission. Yes, that is what he needs."

"And I," the Sheriff answered, refilling his pipe, "I—need a few prisoners in my jail. How are things at Cap à l'Ours? You have had no trouble yet with your closed cottages, I suppose?"

"No; but I shall have—next month—or in March—when the young fellows who are not in the woods have too much time on their hands. Always to them it seems like a great thing to break into one of my cottages and to walk through the rooms as though they were *étrangers* themselves. Oh, they do not do much harm. If they find left-over stores. they eat them. If they discover a bottle of whisky, they drink it. They never take anything else. But they might set things on fire, you know. No, no; these idle young fellows do not bother me. But, as you know, there are other people who go with them, or who slip into the opened windows after they are gone. They take the field glasses—the rifles—the blankets—all things that can be sold. And of these stolen things, we never hear anything. They disappear. And then, in June, my cottage people come back, and one thing after another is missed. Then it is 'Oh, Eli, why do we pay you to guard our cottage in the winter?' Last September old Colonel Blake told me that if his cottage was entered again this winter, he would be forced to find a better guardian than I."

"And yet, Eli," said the Sheriff, after a moment's silence, "you and I both have an idea where those valuable stolen things go."

"An idea is no proof——"

"You might search their house!"

"What, me?" exclaimed Eli, jumping up. "How? What with? A houseyard full of biting dogs; and a houseful of people all with black hearts! If I got in and found anything, I should never come out. And if I did not find anything, well, then more things than ever would be stolen the next winter. But I have been thinking a great deal about this matter. Listen. Perhaps you would help me."

Bending forward, he whispered for some moments in the Sheriff's ear. And while he whispered, the

Sheriff kept nodding his head, and tapping his discolored teeth with the stem of his pipe.

"It might work," said the Sheriff, glancing round his little office to be sure that no one had overheard.

"You will help? I could not do it alone."

"Good!" The Sheriff stood up and the two men shook hands. "If it does work," he said, "I shall have company here for the rest of the winter, until the judge comes in April."

"And if I help you to a new boarder or two, you will mention to the Seigneur that the best medicine for all his troubles is a good honest man, a man of confidence in this parish, who will collect the rents of the Seigneurie—for a consideration? I will be a better 'secretary' than little Madame Pilote. The Seigneur thought, I suppose, that she would be cheaper than having a *facteur* as his old uncle did. She teaches him French and writes his letters to Bouillane and the others at the same time. Oh, là, là! But we shall change all that, you and I!"

CHAPTER FOUR

The Trap

One afternoon late in February, Monsieur Pednaud drove the plumed hearse into his barnyard, after a very important funeral *"de première classe."* The long ride with Amyas, his silent companion, had given him time to formulate a plan which he put into operation at once.

"Amyas," he said, as his helper began to dismantle the hearse of its ornaments; "Amyas, you are already a man grown. Nineteen? Well, then, almost so old. Up to now I have had no fault to find with you."

Amyas' heart jumped up chokingly into his throat. What was coming now! Had they found out about his friendship with the Lajoies? But the next moment, his heart began behaving naturally again, for the Sheriff went on.

"I hope to find no fault in the future, so I am going to repose upon you a very great responsibility. I am obliged to go to Quebec for a week—a matter of an important case that I must discuss with Monsieur le Judge before he comes to us in April. The jail is empty, thank the good God—this has been a good winter. Doubtless the prayers of our Curé in the Quebec hospital have helped us. I shall hope to see him when I am in Quebec myself. Now, the *pompes funèbres* I shall intrust to you. Of course you cannot properly lay out a body—Madame, my wife, will attend to that, with my nephew. But the horses, the two hearses, together with the black plumes that are kept under the bed of Madame, my wife, these I leave in your care. I may be away a week—perhaps longer. There will be at least one funeral of the second class, I think, for I saw Monsieur le Curé Bienvenu going with the Sacrament to old Madame Billedoux who is over eighty, you know. She should be dead—and buried—before I get back."

Amyas was tingling with pride. Always he had hoped for a chance to sit on the high box of the black hearse, with the big black plumes on either side of him, and Monsieur Pednaud's cocked hat on his head. And now, if only old Madame Billedoux did not hang on too long, he, Amyas, would probably do this very thing. He felt that he must tell someone about his sudden rise in the world. So that same evening he asked Madame Pednaud's permission to visit his sister, Léontine. He hurried off, down the snow-covered road, whistling his Mademoiselle's favorite song, "Que les beaux jours sont courts." It was a sad song; but he made it sound cheerful enough.

He found Léontine in Corinne's hot, stuffy living and sleeping room on the second floor of their house. She had just finished putting the two older children to bed in one shadowy corner, while Corinne sat sewing and rocking the cradle of her youngest with one foot.

Amyas blurted out the story of his future greatness. As he did so, he kept looking around the room. He missed something, for he had counted on impressing Eli Martel with his story. And Eli was nowhere to be seen. Perhaps he was out in the snow, at Cap à l'Ours, making his rounds of the summer cottages on the Ridge. Amyas sat with the two women for an hour, hoping that Eli would return. But there was no sign of him. Finally, as he stood up to go, his curiosity got the better of him.

"Oh, Eli is not at home just now," Corinne said, in answer to his question. She had put down the *Courrier of the Sacred Heart* that she was trying to read in the dim light of one oil lamp, and was pressing a hand to her eyes as though they were painful. "He started to drive to Quebec yesterday. He has important business there for the Seigneur. Maybe you haven't heard, Amyas, that Eli is going to be the *facteur* at the Seigneurie, and to help collect the rents. In Quebec he has to buy a new pair of glasses for the Seigneur. And he is going to bring me a pair too. It's so hard for me to see to read these dark evenings. When will he be back? He was not sure. In a week, perhaps. Two days for the drive to Quebec; three days there; and two more days for the drive back here, if the roads are good. Good-night. Come again soon. We women will be lonely."

As Amyas walked back towards Bonne Rivière, he felt a little disappointed. He had counted on impressing Eli. For, as he knew well enough, Eli had never thought much of him, had treated him always as a mere child—he who was to drive the black hearse—if Madame Billedoux had sense enough to die soon.

As he came up the desolate road that led upwards beside the river toward the Pednaud farm, he caught sight of a black shadow on the snow. Someone was moving to and fro under the trees just opposite the path to the Sheriff's house. It was bright moonlight. But that moving shadow was mysterious—disturbing.

Then as Amyas came abreast of the trees, someone called to him, softly.

"Oh," gasped Amyas, with sudden relief. "It's you, is it, Ulysse?"

Ulysse Lajoie stepped out into the moonlight. He gave Amyas a friendly thump on the back.

"You didn't come to our house tonight," he said, drawing Amyas into the shadow. "I thought you might be sick."

Amyas had a warm, satisfying sensation of happiness. Ulysse, his friend, had been anxious about him. And besides all this, he had news for his hero, news that would surely enhance his importance in his friend's eyes.

"Is old Pednaud at home?" Ulysse asked. Naturally, it had never occurred to Amyas that it was important for the Lajoie family to know where the Sheriff was, that they had made him welcome among them because he had knowledge of his master's whereabouts.

"He is now," Amyas said. "But he won't be there long." And then he burst into an exciting description of his own coming good fortune. "Eli Martel has gone to Quebec too," he added.

Never before had Ulysse been so kind, so affectionate. He put his arm about Amyas' shoulder, congratulated him on his good luck, made a little good-natured fun of Eli and of the Sheriff.

"If anyone wants to break into a summer cottage," he said, laughing very softly in Amyas' ear, "now is their chance. If some of the younger fellows who drink in the evening at that old place on the Quebec road hear what you've just told me, they'll want to have a midnight party *chez Madame Aspinwall or chez Monsieur le Colonel Blake* on the Ridge. They've never got into the cottage of your Mademoiselle Randolph, have they?"

"No," said Amyas, in a burst of confidence. "You can see the front of the house from the village street, and they're afraid, I suppose, of showing a light. But they might get in the back way. The kitchen door isn't boarded up, because Corinne goes in that way, once in a while, to see that the roof doesn't leak."

"They must be very rich, those friends of yours." Ulysse spoke covetously as though he envied Amyas his acquaintance with such important people. Amyas felt more puffed up than ever. He began to boast a little.

"But, yes. They have another house in the States. That is why they leave all their mattresses and blankets and things up here. They have others at home. I have watched Corinne put them away in the big closet under the stairs. The guns are there, too. And bottles. Cans also—whole long rows of them—soup and vegetables."

"I hope they lock them up carefully. If some of our gay young men knew——"

"There is no danger," Amyas protested. "What is the use of nailing up a closet if the windows of the house are boarded and the doors locked? But I must be getting back. Madame Pednaud——"

To his surprise, Ulysse made no answer. He seemed, for the moment, to have lost all interest in the Randolphs, even in Amyas himself. His arm dropped from Amyas' shoulder.

"I must be going too," he said abruptly. "Au revoir." And with that he was gone, moving quietly along the far side of the road, in the shadow of the trees.

"I have hurt his feelings," said Amyas to himself, as he hastened back toward the Pednaud house.

"I spoke too much of my rich friends, while his family is so poor. And Ulysse is of a proud spirit. But I do not believe that he has a black heart at all."

The next few days were full of excitement for Amyas. For old Madame Billedoux did die; and Amyas did ride in all the Pednaud glory on the box of the black hearse. He ached to describe it all to Ulysse. But during Pednaud's absence in Quebec, he was needed at the farm during the evening. He had to comb out and smooth the black plumes of the *pompes funèbres* and put them back carefully under Madame Pednaud's bed. He had to wash the mud from the wheels of the black hearse, and take care besides of the horses. During three days of hard but happy work, he had no time, even in the evening, for a visit to the Lajoies.

Then came Sunday; overcast, warmer than usual, with fog rolling in from the St. Lawrence. He served as one of the acolytes at the high mass; and he went to Corinne Martel's for his Sunday dinner. In the afternoon he thought of going to see Sister Onésime at the Orphelinat; she had waved to him discreetly as he had sat on the box of the black hearse. But it was too wet. It was a most depressing day. Léontine pressed him to stay for supper. He wanted to stay; everything seemed so cheerful in Corinne's little house. He knew, however, that he must feed the Pednaud horses, so he began to search for his cap and homespun jacket. He noticed that

Corinne and Léontine kept whispering together and giggling in corners, like silly girls. They were always looking out of the window as though expecting someone.

At last he was ready to go. Corinne, after looking out of the window once more, came towards him with a covered basket in her hand. "He is not coming, Léontine," Amyas heard her say to his sister. "We can send it by Amyas." Then she turned to him. "On your way home, Amyas," she said, "stop at the house of the sexton—you know, Eli's cousin, Jean Villeneuve—and give him this basket. I suppose he forgot to come for it."

Both women kissed him good-by, giggled together once more, and saw him safely down the stairs and out at the back door on to the path that had been cut through the snow to the main road. It was nearly dark, already. Amyas hurried along, the basket swinging from his hand. At the turn of the road, he slipped on a bit of ice, and in recovering himself, the basket struck the fence on his left. Something fell out of it. In the dark he bent down, felt for what had fallen, found it, and put it on top of the cloth with which the basket was covered.

At the Villeneuve house, just beyond the church, Amyas knocked, and held out the basket to Eli's cousin, the *bedeau,* or sexton. In the light from the hall, he caught sight of the object that had fallen from the basket and that he had placed outside the protecting napkin. He recognized it at once. It was Eli Martel's tobacco pouch, given him years ago by Colonel Blake, and one of Eli's most cherished possessions.

"Corinne told me to give you this basket," he said to Villeneuve. "But she must have put Eli's tobacco pouch into it by mistake."

Villeneuve, a fat, good-natured man, who loved his mild jokes beyond all else in the world, winked at Amyas slyly.

"By mistake! Oh, of course; by mistake!" he chuckled. "Don't try to make any joke like that with me. Oh, all right—all right. I'll see that Eli gets it. I was coming for it myself—only the Curé needed me to empty the alms boxes. I don't see why you couldn't take it to him yourself."

Amyas gaped.

"What—to Quebec?"

Villeneuve chuckled again. He seemed to be enjoying some secret jest of his own.

"To Quebec—of course! Only—if any of those young devils up the road think of playing any tricks tonight, they'll find my dear cousin Eli closer than Quebec—oh, much closer. And perhaps you think that Monsieur Pednaud is in Quebec also! Oh, là, là!"

He shut the door in Amyas' face and went puffing and snickering down the hall.

Amyas did not move for a moment or two. Then he started off again on his way home. So that was the mystery! Eli and the Sheriff were not in Quebec at all. It was a trap—set to catch some of the wild young men who lived near that drinking place on the Quebec road. Well, what did he care? Nevertheless, he was uneasy. He kept remembering some of the things that his friend Ulysse had said to him the last time they had been together. Then suddenly, as though someone had struck him or barred his way, he came to a sudden halt.

It was he—he, Amyas—who had told Ulysse that the Sheriff and Eli were to be in Quebec for a week. And that was a lie. He had not known it to be a lie. But how would Ulysse know that? If he learned that Eli and the Sheriff were lurking somewhere in the neighborhood, he would think that Amyas had intentionally deceived him. Ulysse was all right, of course. But people said unpleasant things about his family. What if some one of that family got into trouble—because Ulysse had told them that Amyas had told him that Eli and the Sheriff——

His mind was in a turmoil. Lying and deceit were bad things. But to deceive one's best friend—a friend who trusted you—even if the deceit were not intentional—that was the very worst thing of all. He must set it right somehow—at once—before he went to bed.

Hurrying, stumbling, he reached the Pednaud house. His supper was waiting for him. He ate it in silence. Madame Pednaud was a kindly young soul. She noticed that Amyas had no appetite, and she plied him with questions that almost drove him mad. No, he was not ill. Perhaps he had eaten too much at Corinne Martel's at dinner. He hastened out to the stable, looked after the horses, and finished his other work as soon as possible. Then, standing before Madame Pednaud, balancing first on one foot and then on the other, he informed her that he was going out again.

"Out into this bad weather?" she exclaimed. "What is the matter with you, anyhow?"

Amyas mumbled something about his sister.

"But you have just come from her house!" Madame Pednaud was becoming suspicious. Amyas had never behaved like this before. Could it be a girl? Well, he was old enough, surely. And she was still young enough to understand. Amyas seemed to be exhibiting all the usual symptoms of adolescent love.

"What's her name?" she asked abruptly. "If you'll tell me her name, I'll let you go."

That was too much for Amyas. A girl! When he was almost mad with anxiety about matters of friendship and loyalty that no woman would ever understand.

"There isn't any girl," he stammered. "I—I hate girls. But I've got to go. Oh, please, please, Madame Pednaud, don't try to keep me here any longer. I've got something that I've got to do tonight. I've just got to!" His eyes suddenly filled with tears.

Madame Pednaud was more puzzled, more suspicious than ever.

"I've got—I've got"—mumbled Amyas with a sudden inspiration—"I've got to see Monsieur le Curé Bienvenu right away. It's very important. I've done—done something wrong." A recollection of something that Sister Onésime had once said to him after he had been naughty and disobedient flashed through his mind. "I would not wish to lie down and sleep in a state of mortal sin."

Madame Pednaud stared. She herself was not very *pieuse*.

"You're getting very particular about your immortal soul all of a sudden," she said. "Well, go along. But be back soon."

The night was unusually warm for the time of year. Underfoot the snow was slippery and soft. And there was a thin, gray fog over everything, that distorted familiar outlines. Amyas hurried up the river road.

As he turned in at the Lajoies' little farm, he was surprised to find the place so quiet. No dogs rushed out at him. From the barn, back of the house, he heard a muffled yelp or two. That was all. And the house looked darker than usual. Could the whole family be in bed at this hour? Why, it was scarcely nine o'clock. He walked round the house, to the back door. In an upper window he saw a light. Someone must be about. He knocked. The dogs in the barn yowled and yapped. Amyas knocked again. Then he heard slow footsteps coming down creaking stairs. The back door opened. And there stood fat, kindly old Madame Lajoie, holding a smoking oil lamp in her hand. But even in that dim light, Amyas realized that she did not look as kindly as usual. She glared at him.

"Ulysse," Amyas panted.

"He has a toothache. He is in bed. So is my husband. And the girls are all out." She started to close the door. But Amyas put his foot across the threshold.

"But I must see Ulysse. I must."

A sudden light of uneasiness seemed to flare in the old woman's dim eyes beneath the puffy eyelids.

"You can't see him. Go on home. What's this all about anyhow?"

For a moment Amyas hesitated. Then, determined not to go to bed that night without having in some way righted himself in the eyes of his friend, he began with a rush of tumbled words.

"Tell him that I didn't mean to deceive him about—about the Sheriff and about Eli Martel.—I didn't understand—I——"

Old Madame Lajoie reached out a hand, seized Amyas firmly by the arm, and with utterly unexpected strength, dragged him into the house and closed the door. Then she put down the lamp on a chair and faced him, as he leant against the dirty, disordered kitchen table. The face that he had once thought so kindly was twisted and distorted with sudden rage; her nostrils twitched, and her eyes were aflame.

"Tell me again," she said, and reaching behind Amyas, she took something from the kitchen table. "But make haste—make haste."

Amyas was terrified. He could not understand. But at any rate, he was inside the house; Ulysse was up-stairs somewhere; and Amyas would have a chance to talk with him as soon as he could get away from this fearful old woman. She must have been drinking.

He poured out his story, telling her of what he had heard that afternoon about Eli and the Sheriff.

"So I want to see Ulysse," he said, growing more and more confused. "I want to tell him that I did not——"

The words hissed on his lips. They were choked in his throat under the pressure of a hand that had shot out toward him and that was almost throttling him, while the lamp light glittered on a long kitchen knife that was held within an inch of his nose.

"I've got a good mind to set a mark on your face that'll spoil your beauty, you young devil."

Amyas could not move. His eyes were fixed on the knife that was coming nearer and nearer to his nostrils. So this, he thought, this is what people mean by *le cœur noir!*

"Now listen," he heard Madame Lajoie say. "And you do what I tell you—or I'll catch you sometime, and Ulysse will hold you while I slit your nose and cut off your ears. Understand that? If I thought you'd done this on purpose, I'd begin slitting you now. But you haven't got sense enough to put up a clever game like that; or pluck enough to come here by yourself afterwards; no!" She pricked his nose with the point of the knife. Amyas felt a drop of blood on his cheek. "That's to remind you," the old woman's hissing voice went on. "Now—run as if a thousand devils were after you—run to Cap à l'Ours—to the Ridge where the cottages are. You can get there in an hour. If you see a light in any one of them, go up and look in. If Ulysse is inside, tell him to drop everything and to leave. Tell him it's all off for tonight, anyway."

"But you said—" stammered Amyas between white lips—"you said that Ulysse was——"

"And so he is, you young idiot—up-stairs asleep—if anyone ever asks you." Then, an abrupt change came into the angry, gleaming eyes. The hand dropped from Amyas' throat; the knife was gone too. Amyas could scarcely believe his eyes. The terrifying old witch with the black heart who had been threatening him so hideously only a moment ago had disappeared. In her place stood the kindly fat Madame Lajoie, whom he had known so long. A friendly person—disturbed—anxious about something—and asking him, Amyas, to help her.

"You won't mind my getting angry, will you, Amyas," a voice was saying, the same voice, but with what a different intonation. "You see, I'm so worried about Ulysse. He's your friend, isn't he? And you wouldn't want to get him into trouble. He's off with those wild fellows at the drinking place on the Quebec road. He heard what you told him about the Sheriff and Monsieur Martel; and I'm afraid that he—and those fellows—might do something foolish tonight. I sent my husband after him. But he hasn't come back. If the Sheriff should catch him in one of the cottages—well, you know how hard everyone has been on poor Ulysse. And you see, in a way, it *is* your fault. I know you didn't mean any harm. But you can make it all good if you can get to Ulysse in time. Take this lantern with you. And I'll give you Ulysse's dog, Mille Vaches. He's shut up in the barn. He'll help you to find Ulysse. When you get to the Ridge at Cap à l'Ours—and if you can't find Ulysse or my husband anywhere—then whistle—whistle the end of that song the *étrangers* like so much, '*Que les beaux jours sont courts*'—and wave your lantern, three times to the right and twice to the left. Don't forget that. If my husband sees it, he will understand. Now hurry. And I, meanwhile"—she cast upward a look of agonized anxiety —"I, an old woman who can do nothing else, will pray—will pray to the Good God for my son!"

She kissed Amyas on the forehead.

A few moments later Amyas was hurrying down the river road, the lantern dangling from one hand, and in the other the end of the rope that he had run through Mille Vaches' collar. Behind him, the house of the Lajoies was silent and dark once more. Amyas shivered a little and touched the tiny cut on his nose. So that was *le cœur noir!* And yet he knew perfectly well that the same Madame Lajoie who had threatened to slit his nostrils only a few moments ago was now on her knees, honestly and whole-heartedly imploring the hosts of heaven in her son's behalf.

On Amyas hurried. Down the road into Bonne Rivière, through the village, and past Corinne's house. His mind was filled with thoughts of Ulysse, and of his danger, for he understood fairly well now what was going on tonight. A trap had been set, and the game that had been stalked unsuccessfully for so long was walking into it. Could he warn them in time—before the trap closed?

Now and then he ran for a few hundred yards, until he was so out of breath that he had to walk again. The dog followed silently at his heels. By going across the golf links, now deep in snow, he could cut off a good half mile. But here he lost time, for he fell into a big drift, and later went tumbling down the hill, just beyond the first tee and the club house. The fog cleared for a moment. In the moonlight he saw the little hutch in which the caddie master sat. How often had Amyas himself come up to its window, carrying the clubs of his Mademoiselle, waiting until she had signed his caddie-ticket and had given him a final nod of thanks and au revoir! How wonderful she was! And how kind to him, always! Surely, if she could see him now, fighting his way through the drifts in front of the club house veranda, she would be proud of him—because he was trying to keep faith with his friend.

Now he was among the first houses of Cap à l'Ours. It was after ten, and very few windows were lighted. But the sounds of singing and dancing came from the Riveron's house. They must be having a *veillée*. He could hear the big, noisy baritone of old Pontfile shouting, *"Alouette, gentille Alouette,"* followed by the crashing chorus of men's and women's voices, *"Oh—Alouette, gentille Alouette, je te plumerai."* It made him feel rather lonesome; and Mille Vaches whimpered at his heels.

Past the little wooden church—Monsieur le Curé Bienvenu was going to build a big brick one soon, people said—here was where the fire had stopped, so many years ago. And now came the steep, upward sweep of the Quebec road. He was nearly there. But it had taken him more than an hour to get thus far. And he still had to find Ulysse. Up the steep, slippery road—up and up. It tore the very lungs out of you, even in summer. But now, with the slippery snow beneath your feet, it was ten times worse.

After half-an-hour's climb, he turned and looked back. Below him, to his right, stretched the Ridge. The high roofs of some of the summer cottages stood up against the distant stretch of the St. Lawrence. If only he knew exactly where the drinking place was on the Quebec road! He had heard of it often enough. But in the darkness, he could never find it. Perhaps the best thing that he could do would be to cut across the fields to his right and then make his way down hill. This would bring him to the back of the Ridge—to the back doors of the cottages. He took his bearings as best he could. That roof was Colonel Blake's; off farther to the right was the Aspinwalls'. And there—in the middle—sticking up among a little clump of pines—was the Randolph cottage—that he knew well.

He waded and fought his way through the drifted fields until he was looking down directly on the back of the Randolph house. Just as he set off toward it, down hill, the wind changed suddenly, as it so often does on the north bank of the great river, and a cold blast came whistling in from the water. In ten minutes the temperature had fallen twenty degrees. And with the wind had come the fog, blown in from the St. Lawrence. Amyas could not see five feet ahead. But he made his way down slowly, step by step, trying to keep the line that he had marked out before the fog blew in.

It seemed to him that he must have walked for over an hour before he came suddenly up against something in his path, something round, covered with snow. He went over it, heels over head; his lantern went out. The rope slipped out of his hand, and he heard Mille Vaches' low whine move away from him into the darkness. He got to his feet slowly. What had he fallen over, anyway? He ran his hand over it, searching for his fallen lantern. Then he could have laughed aloud with satisfaction. Why, he knew what this thing was. He and Ulysse had dragged it around many and many an hour last summer. The Randolphs' iron roller for the tennis court.

Now, at last, he knew where he was. The Randolph cottage must lie somewhere on his right, as he faced the river. He found his lantern; but the chimney was smashed, so he took the candle from inside and thrust it into his pocket. He had matches, and it might prove useful.

Slowly, step by step, he moved along the Ridge, holding out his hands before him, like a man playing blindman's buff. Up, out of the fog, loomed the corner of a house—and then a long flight of steps. Amyas recognized them at once—the steps of the Randolphs' veranda, up and down which his Mademoiselle walked so often every summer. He stood there, uncertain what to do next. He knew that old Madame Lajoie would want him to visit or walk around all the larger cottages and to keep his eyes open for a tell-tale light. Of course, he told himself, the Randolphs' cottage had never been entered in the winter. It was scarcely worth while to feel his way around its walls. But he was thinking, just then, more of his Mademoiselle than of Ulysse, and he lingered for a moment or two at the foot of the veranda steps. It was a still night. Then he heard a sound—indistinct—muffled—a sort of explosion.

A popping pop rather than the sharp crack of a revolver. Lifting his eyes toward the veranda, he noticed a very thin beam of light that cut like a long, golden needle through the thick fog.

Someone was in the house. Perhaps it was Eli, who as guardian had a right to be there. Ulysse and his wild young friends would never dare—And then, with a rush, he remembered Ulysse's questions about the Randolph cottage, his own boasting descriptions of it, of the big closet under the stairs. His Mademoiselle's house! Her things! Ulysse knew how kind she had been to him; he had even good-humoredly teased Amyas about his devotion to her. Ulysse couldn't have betrayed him like this!

Up the veranda steps he went, very softly. The tiny shaft of light was coming from a small peep-hole, about an inch square, cut in one of the heavy shutters, the shutter that blocked the dining room window, so arranged that the guardian could look into the room on his weekly rounds, without having to open the house. By standing tiptoe, Amyas could look in. But even before he looked, he knew what he was going to see.

Around the Randolphs' dining room table sat a group of four young men absorbed in a game of cards. There were two lanterns on the table, glasses, and two big fat-bellied bottles with gold foil about their necks. From one of these, apparently just opened, one of the men was filling the four glasses. His back was toward Amyas, but that back was familiar enough. Amyas saw him disappear for a moment and then come back with a rifle in his hand—Mademoiselle Anne's favorite rifle. He offered it to one of the other three men, but all three shook their heads, and motioned Ulysse to put it back where he had found it. Amyas understood. Those three did not mind breaking into a cottage for the fun of the thing, drinking a bottle or two of champagne if they could find it, and then departing, very much pleased with themselves for having spent an amusing evening at some *étranger's* expense. But to steal anything valuable; no, not they.

Now Ulysse reappeared. Before joining his friends at the table, he came toward the window, outside of which Amyas stood. Evidently he was going to peer out through the little peep-hole. Here was the chance that Amyas had hoped for. As Ulysse's face came close to the inner glass of the window, Amyas stuck his finger through the little hole and tried to tap on the glass. But he could not quite reach it. Withdrawing his finger, he put his lips to the hole and whistled the last line of the old song, *"Que les beaux jours sont courts."*

The result of his action was disappointing in the extreme. Ulysse did not jump; or even appear alarmed. He went back to the table, sat down quietly, and took up his cards. Amyas stared hopelessly into the room again. What should he do now?

Then, quite unexpectedly, things began to happen. Ulysse started up, seemed to listen, disappeared in the door-way that led to the kitchen, and was back again in a second. The other three men leaped up also, and caught up the two lanterns. One of them made an effort to hide the empty bottles and the used glasses, but Ulysse hurried him off. In a moment the room was dark and empty.

Amyas began to feel rather pleased with himself. Evidently, Ulysse and his friends had entered the cottage by the back door, the only door that was not boarded up. They were leaving that same way. He had warned them in time. Now the best thing that he could do would be to go home and go to bed. He would have a hard time explaining matters to Madame Pednaud. But he would think up some story. He turned to descend the veranda steps.

Then, over his shoulder, from the house behind him, a thin needle of light pierced the fog again. Someone with a light had come back into the dining room. Could it be Eli—come just too late? Ulysse and his friends must have escaped safely, for if they had run into Eli's arms as they left the back door, Amyas would have heard them. Yet the quiet of the night had been undisturbed by any sound of voices.

Amyas tiptoed back across the veranda to the peep-hole in the window shutter.

For nearly five minutes his eyes were glued to the shutter before he understood what he was looking at. In the light of one dim lantern, shadowy figures were flitting in and out of the room, piling things into two big canvas bags that were lying open on the table. That bent figure was old Joseph Lajoie, surely. And there was Ulysse, binding together with a string a whole bundle of fishing rods. There was a girl there, too. Now, as she bent over a rifle that she was holding in her hands, the light of the lantern struck her face. Mélanie Lajoie!

Amyas understood now. What a dumb idiot he had been! That was the way the Lajoie family worked. Ulysse suggested to a few foolish young fellows that it would be fun to break into one of the cottages. Then, after they had broken in and amused themselves with the *étranger's* property, they were frightened off by a pretended alarm. After that, the Lajoies, probably in hiding nearby all the time, walked in and stripped the house. And now they were taking things that belonged to his Mademoiselle!

Something rubbed against Amyas' feet. It was Mille Vaches, the dog. And with the dog's presence, came the recollection of his errand. He had come all the way from Pednaud's farm to warn Ulysse, his friend. And yet, here was this same friend outraging a house that to Amyas was only a little less holy than his parish church, fingering guns, fishing-rods, blankets, that were all intimately associated with the very gods of Amyas' private Olympus. True! Horribly, helplessly true! But in spite of it all, Ulysse was his friend. And Ulysse was in danger now because of Amyas—because he had boasted, because he had been so proud of his chance to ride on the box of the big hearse.

It was only for a moment that Amyas hesitated. Then, with Mille Vaches at his heels, he hurried down the veranda steps and fought his way through the bushes at the side of the house. He was very much afraid. He had not forgotten old Madame Lajoie and her kitchen knife. What would Ulysse and his father do to him when they heard what he had to say? It would be so much easier to slink off into the fog and let the Lajoies run their own risks. After all, perhaps the Sheriff and Eli were miles away. His fear might have won a victory over his loyalty, had it not been for Mille Vaches. For at the open kitchen door, the dog picked up his master's scent, and with a yapping bark of delight, disappeared into the shadowy house. A moment later the bark died away in a sobbing whine.

Amyas stood in the kitchen, waiting. Then the door from the dining room swung open, and Ulysse hurried in. He held Mille Vaches before him, with both his hands about the struggling dog's throat, choking the life out of it. His black eyes were ablaze. He looks, thought Amyas, just like his mother! The dog's tongue was hanging out, its big brown eyes were looking up, questioningly, wonderingly, into its master's distorted face.

Now Amyas could not bear to see things hurt. Often and often he had been laughed at for his "tender heart." And now there swept over him a sudden rage against Ulysse. Black heart or no black heart, knife or no knife, he could not bear the sight of the strangling dog. From the shadows where he stood, he threw himself upon Ulysse, and tore the dog out of his hands. And Mille Vaches, loyal still to the master who was throttling the life out of him, snapped at his deliverer and bit him on the wrist.

But Ulysse had been so taken by surprise that he dropped the dog, that now lay panting on the ground, and turned upon Amyas, slipping a hunting knife from a leathern sheath at his side. At the same moment, a pair of strong, wiry arms pinioned Amyas from behind. He stood there for a second or two, helpless, unable to speak, trying to remember some tag end of a prayer that would help him into Purgatory, although he felt as if he must surely be bound for Hell. But a third person—Amyas could just catch a glimpse of a woman's skirt—had snatched up the lantern from the kitchen table and was holding it in Amyas' face.

There was a moment of dead silence, broken only by the labored panting of Mille Vaches on the floor.

"Spying on us, are you?" he heard a voice say behind him, the voice of the man who was holding him in his arms. It sounded like old Joseph Lajoie. "Well, we've ways of making people hold their tongues. Wait a minute, Ulysse. You can't see what you're doing. Mélanie, move the light this way."

Then, at last, Amyas found his tongue. Hurriedly, shaking so in every limb that he could scarcely talk at all, he stammered out the warning—that he had come so far to give. He saw that they did not believe him, that they thought he was playing for time, for a chance to escape. He must make them understand—he must—there might be danger in every moment lost!

"But Madame Lajoie sent me," he panted. "She gave me the dog to bring with me. She told me to whistle '*Que les beaux jours sont courts*' if I couldn't find you—to swing the lantern——" What had the old woman said? He mustn't forget that now. —"the lantern—three times to the right, then twice to the left."

The arms that were pinioning him were loosened. He saw the lined, bearded face of old Joseph Lajoie peer around from behind, so that the old man's cheek almost touched his own. Amyas shivered a little. He had never imagined that the good-natured, quiet old man could look like this; the man whom the *étrangers* loved to take with them into the woods because he was so obliging—so thoughtful of everyone's comfort. Now his thin lips, bristling with a week's beard, were drawn back over scattered fangs of yellow teeth. But he said nothing. And Ulysse still held the hunting knife in his hand.

"I did whistle," persisted Amyas, in the terrifying silence. "I was out there on the veranda. I saw you through the shutter—when Ulysse came close to the window and looked out."

Ulysse turned toward the girl who was holding the lantern.

"I thought it was you, Mélanie," he said. "I thought it was the usual signal."

Mélanie put the lantern down and came forward slowly.

"I didn't whistle," she said very softly. "I wondered why you didn't wait to get those young fools out of the house until you heard from me and knew that Father and I were ready outside." Then she moved still closer to Amyas and stared into his eyes, "I believe he's telling the truth," she whispered. "He couldn't have known about the signal if Mother hadn't sent him. And if he did come to warn us—then——"

At that moment the outer door of the kitchen closed softly. But Amyas had his back to it. The others were too intent on trying to adjust their minds to an unexpected situation.

"Put up your knife, Ulysse." Old Joseph turned abruptly away from Amyas. "I don't trust the boy, though. Anyhow, we'd better be going. Better take what we've got in the bags already and not come back for a second load." Then he leered again into Amyas' face. "You stay here. We'll go first. Give us five minutes before you leave the house. If you really meant to warn us, good; you shan't suffer. We don't forget our friends. But if you're up to anything crooked—then you'd best leave this part of the world as soon as possible." He hesitated a moment, and then added in a lower tone to Ulysse, "Now that he's seen us at work, he'd better go anyhow. Listen, young man. It will be dangerous for you around here after tonight. Not healthy. And the sooner you go, the better. You saw what my son did to the cur that interfered with our business—to his own dog—well, then——"

He left Amyas standing by the kitchen table and disappeared into the dining room. Ulysse followed him.

"Amyas," said Mélanie, touching his cheek with her warm hand. "Why, you're covered with mud, and you're wet through. I do believe you meant to help us. Ulysse was mean. But I'll make up to you for all that. Come to our house some night."

For some reason that he could not understand, Amyas shrank away from her touch.

"Silly," she said. Then, angrily, "Oh, very well, then. Seems to me you're mighty particular for an orphan that doesn't belong to anybody. Well, I'll bid you a sweet good-night." She leaned forward and kissed him on the mouth. Then, furious because she felt no response from his cold, trembling lips, she struck him lightly across the cheek with the flat of her hand.

"Here, Father," she called, as old Joseph and Ulysse reappeared in the kitchen, loaded down with two heavy bags, "let me carry something. I'll take the fishing-rods and the rifle. And now—" she turned at the outer door, her hand on the latch—"we must leave young Mister Holier-than-Thou by himself in the dark for a short time. I hope he enjoys himself!"

She blew out the lantern that she carried. The kitchen was now pitch dark. Amyas shrank back against the farthest wall.

Then, in the heavy blackness, he heard a frightened whisper.

"Who locked the door? Father! Ulysse! It won't open!"

Amyas caught the sound of a rattled latch; the creaking of a door against which someone was leaning in an effort to force it open softly.

For a second or two there was dead silence.

"Do not try to open that door."

A voice—a loud, commanding, familiar voice was speaking from somewhere outside the house. "This cottage is surrounded. It is I, Eli Martel, the guardian of this property. Monsieur le Shérif is with me. And we have revolvers—both of us."

Amyas did not wait for another word. If Eli discovered him here with the Lajoies, here in the house of his Mademoiselle, everyone would think—they would tell her, perhaps—and then.—He turned softly on his heel and tiptoed out of the kitchen, not into the dining room, but into the hall that ended at the foot of the main stairs. He knew every inch of the way. Up the stairs he darted. It was like one of his most fearful nightmares. How often he had dreamed that he was present at some hideous thing—something vile beyond words that was sure to happen in a few minutes, so that he must try to turn and dash off—straining every muscle to get away—away before the terrible thing could happen and he be forced to see it! Now he was at the top of the stairs. He opened a door on his left and went in.

The fog had blown away; the moonlight was coming in from the unshuttered second-story window. The bed, the chairs, the dressing table stood gaunt and bare. The moonlight fell directly on a line of photographs tacked along the walls of the room. Amyas was in the room of his Mademoiselle. Those pictures—they were the pictures that had been taken every autumn for the past five years—after the golf tournament. There she was, Mademoiselle Anne! He could almost distinguish her figure standing in the front row, with the silver cup, the Ladies' Championship Cup in her hands. He sat down on the bare mattress of the bed, panting. What was going to happen now?

Probably the Lajoies would hide in some part of the house, and Eli and the Sheriff would have to hunt them from room to room, with revolvers. Then they would come in here—and find him. He tiptoed to the window. Outside it was a little balcony that jutted out from the corner of the house. Perhaps he could jump down. There were no catches on the windows, thank heaven. Now he was outside. The balcony was protected by a closed wooden railing, about four feet high. He bent over and looked down. No escape that way—unless he had a rope or sheet. And he had neither. Then the sound of voices came up to him in the still night air. He looked around to his left.

From where he stood, he could overlook the back entrance, could just make out the porch in front of the kitchen door. There were lights there—a whole cluster of them.

It was like a play—like the tableaux that his Mademoiselle had once arranged at the Bazaar, so many years ago—when he, Amyas, had been the Archangel Michael.

There was Eli—you could tell him by his stooped shoulders; and that other figure must be the Sheriff. Two or three other men were there, also. The Sheriff was speaking; Amyas could hear every word.

"I shall now give the word to open this door. Put your hands over your heads and walk out slowly. You cannot escape from any other part of the house. If you do not walk out now, we shall leave this door locked until morning, and then come for you when we are good and ready. Be careful. My revolver is pointing now straight at the door."

Amyas peered down. He could not see the kitchen door. But it must be open now. Then, below him, he saw three people step out from the house. Their hands were raised above their heads.

Someone down there laughed—such a good-natured, chuckling laugh. Amyas could scarcely believe his ears. Old Joseph Lajoie was laughing. Now he was speaking—talking to the Sheriff.

"Bonsoir, Monsieur le Shérif," Amyas heard him say. "You have caught us in a rather embarrassing situation."

"Embarrassing!" It was Eli now, angry, but very much pleased with himself. Amyas knew that tone well enough. "So embarrassing that we shall have to ask you to permit us an arrest. Sheriff, put your handcuffs on Ulysse. I'll take Lajoie myself." He nodded his head at Mélanie. "Mademoiselle, I regret that I neglected to bring a pair of these warm gloves for you, also."

Mélanie laughed, too. Why were they all taking it so easily? It would mean prison—long years of prison for the whole family.

"You see before you, Monsieur Martel," old Joseph's voice boomed up to Amyas' ears, "the victim of a desire to protect the property of others. My son, my daughter, and myself had been spending the evening at the house of our cousin, Rosario Marier, on the Quebec Road."

"And he's no better than you are," growled the Sheriff, as he snapped the handcuffs on the old man's wrists.

"Not much, Monsieur le Shérif. There you are right. But after all, he is our cousin. We stay rather late talking with him, and on our way home, Ulysse, here, sees a light in one of the cottages on the Ridge. I know that Monsieur Martel, the guardian, is in Quebec. At least I thought I knew it then. So, anxious to serve him, I persuaded my daughter and Ulysse to walk across from the Quebec Road to this cottage. We found the kitchen door open. We found that two or three of our foolish young men had broken in and had been playing cards on the dining room table. When we arrived, they had gone. Maybe we frightened them away. But we put out the lights. Danger of fire, you know, Monsieur le Gardien. And we were about to leave the house—when you and the Sheriff so abruptly shut the kitchen door."

"You can tell all that to the District Judge," snarled the Sheriff. He was not feeling quite so sure of himself apparently.

"Of a truth, I shall tell him." Amyas heard old Joseph say. "And, Monsieur Martel, let me suggest that you visit this cottage tomorrow, or let us say later today."

"I'll look over it all right," Eli retorted. "And we'll search your house for the missing things."

"You are most welcome to visit my poor house at any time. My dear wife and myself will attempt to entertain you in a becoming manner. But, Monsieur le Gardien, I do not think that you will find anything of value missing in the cottage of your Madame Randolph. A little disorder, perhaps. A few bottles of wine gone, maybe. But nothing of importance, Monsieur le Gardien. We arrived in time to prevent all that. We did, indeed."

Amyas could hear old Joseph's chuckling, good-natured laugh as the little group of lanterns began to move away from the cottage.

They were going down the hill. Amyas watched them, dully. He was too tired to think. He wanted to call out to them; to call them back. But he didn't dare.

And yet, here he was, shut up in the cottage, all alone. All the doors locked, all the windows heavily shuttered.

He went back into the room, closed the high windows, and sat down on the end of the bare mattress.

So this was to be the end of it all. If he couldn't get out, he'd have to starve here. Unless he could slip past Eli when he came to look over things tomorrow.

Starve! He was ravenously hungry now. And he was in pitch darkness. He felt through his pockets, found the candle end that he had saved from Madame Lajoie's lantern, and lit it. He started to walk around the bare room. Here was where his Mademoiselle had slept and dressed, morning after morning, for so many summers. On this same bed she had rested after the golf tournament. But except for the line of photographs, there was not a sign of her presence. Then he trod on something soft. It was an old glove—a golf glove.

Amyas turned it over in the light of his candle-end. There was a dark stain on the inside, below the thumb. That settled it for Amyas. It was her golfing glove, right enough. One that she had used for years. He remembered how she had cut her hand, somehow, just before an important championship match, and how the cut had broken open and had begun to bleed when she and her opponent were even all and two to go. Yet she had paid no attention to her bleeding hand. She had won the match on the nineteenth hole. His Mademoiselle! He had been her caddie then—years ago—; he had seen her do it.

She would never have thrown that old glove away. She must have dropped it here in the hurry of packing.

Amyas sat staring at the glove. Then he rubbed it against his cheek. He would have liked to kiss it; but somehow that seemed to him a profanation. But he held it between his hands as he knelt down by the bare bed and said his prayers. It was not wise to go to bed without at least one Our Father and a Hail Mary, even in an empty, locked house. He stretched himself out on the bed. He was very, very tired; hungry and cold. The house was bitterly cold, too. Probably he would freeze to death during the night. But it did not make any difference. So, holding the old golf glove between his hands, he fell asleep.

He did not hear a dog that came sniffing up the stairs and into the room; a dog that leaped lightly on the bed and lay down beside him. He was far too exhausted, too fast asleep to feel the warm tongue that licked his cold face and the open wound on one of his clasped hands.

CHAPTER FIVE

A Stiff-Necked Idealist

Monsieur le Curé of Bonne Rivière had come back from the hospital in Quebec. Everyone in the village was delighted. The whole parish had turned out to line the village streets when he came driving up to the steps of the Presbytère in the sleigh of Monsieur Pednaud, who had sent it with his two best horses all the way to Quebec, in order to fetch Monsieur le Curé home. People crowded around the sleigh, the men reaching out to shake his hand, the women bobbing little curtsies, asking for his blessing, trying to tell him how much he had been missed.

After he had gone up the steps of the Presbytère on the arm of Monsieur Bienvenu, the Curé of Cap à l'Ours, the little crowd seemed unwilling to disperse at once. Philippe Bergeron kept telling François Villeneuve how well the Curé was looking! What a blessing it was to have hospitals only two or three days away, like the one in Quebec! While from the window of the Orphelinat, the Mother Superior and Sister Onésime kept looking at the door of the Presbytère, as if they were anxious to follow the Curé inside—into his warm study—into his comfortable chair by the fire. Yet, when the Reverend Mother did at last turn away from the window, there were tears in her eyes. Sister Onésime fingered the crucifix on her breast; then, lifting it to her lips, she kissed the pierced feet, and said, under her breath, *"Fiat voluntas tua."*

For everyone, from the Reverend Mother down to the least respectable farmer's wife—from the Sheriff himself down to old Joseph Lajoie, sitting at ease in the Sheriff's jail—soon knew perfectly well that their Curé had returned from the Quebec hospital only to make preparations for a longer journey—a journey from which he would never return to Bonne Rivière. But because they thought that the Curé himself did not know it, they made great pretense of a happy home-coming.

Of course the Curé did know. Only he had so many things to do after his absence, that he did not have much time to think about himself.

On the first Saturday after his return, he was sitting in his study—rather bare and chill except for the books in their faded gold bindings and the brightly painted statue of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in a far corner—trying to get a grip once more on the reins of his parish. For two months he had been almost completely cut off from his people, except for an occasional letter from the Beadle, who was too fat and usually too lazy to write much. His colleague, Monsieur Bienvenu, in the upper village, had written, of course; but the Curé knew that he had kept many things to himself in order to prevent the invalid from worrying.

From where he sat, he could hear a hushed murmur of voices in his cold, narrow hall, where the people waited, who wanted to see him. He might as well begin with Eli Martel. He had heard that in many ways Eli was a changed man this winter; not drinking, and yet not paying over much attention to his wife and children.

"Salut, Monsieur le Curé," Eli stood in the doorway, making low obeisance by waving his cap with its red ear-pieces up and down in front of his face.

"Ah, Eli, but I am glad to be back. Well, what have you to tell me? For I can see that you bulge with news. How are your summer cottages at Cap à l'Ours?"

Eli permitted himself a modest chuckle.

"Ah, Monsieur le Curé has heard of that, then? Well, it came out all right in the end. Nothing of value lost. I have, however, a list here of the small things that disappeared. No doubt if Monsieur le Curé would read them out from the altar steps on Sunday, they will be returned. That is all except what was drunken—and what are a few bottles of wine to Madame Randolph!"

"Not much. But a great deal to the men who stole them. And the Lajoies?"

Eli lifted both hands with a gesture of helplessness.

"Ah, but they are a clever lot. Nothing of great value seems to have disappeared from Madame Randolph's cottage. It is true that there is confusion in the closet under the stairs, which does not look like Mademoiselle Anne's careful ways. But how do I know in what condition she left that closet? She does not remember, herself, I imagine. And if all her belongings are there, what can one do? Some of the things are thrown together in two old sacks. But by the time she arrives here in June to identify or not to identify those sacks, why, the District Judge will have heard the Lajoies' case. Trespassing they were, maybe. But, according to them, in a good cause. If we find the young men who are said to have broken in before the Lajoies came—if any such actually exist—why, that will substantiate the Lajoies' story. And if these same young men know anything about the Lajoies' doings, they will keep their mouths shut. It is not healthy to have the Lajoies for enemies, they, with their black hearts. But anyhow, Monsieur le Curé, Monsieur le Shérif has at least company now in his jail. He plays cards with old Joseph, who has already won ten dollars from him. Ulysse and his father will save money this winter, living at the expense of the Province. Moreover, Mélanie comes often to visit them. Madame Pednaud, the third, thinks that she comes much too often for the peace of mind of Monsieur, her husband."

The Curé checked this flow of narration with one uplifted finger.

"I will not listen to unkind gossip, Eli," he said. "What of yourself?"

Eli seemed to expand with sudden pride.

"I have been fortunate enough to recommend myself to the Seigneur. Monsieur le Curé knows that the Seigneur does not entirely understand our people as did his uncle before him. There have been difficulties in collecting rents. Monsieur le Shérif mentioned me as a personage of probity, having been for years guardian of the summer cottages at Cap à l'Ours. Now I am striving to assist the Seigneur with some of his tenants. It is hard work. I have to walk long distances."

"But," interposed the Curé, "there is, I take it, a commission."

Eli shrugged his shoulders.

"A small one. That is nothing. It is the honor that I esteem."

"Doubtless. See you prove worthy of it." The Curé hesitated. He had been keeping one more question till the last; a question that he rather dreaded to ask.

"And Amyas—Amyas Dufour? The Beadle wrote me——"

"Alas, Monsieur le Curé, alas," Eli began, letting his shoulders sag in utter hopelessness, and staring at the floor as if he felt himself disgraced by some family tragedy which he could not prevent even though he deplored it deeply. "And to think of all that you have done for the unhappy young man! He who at one time, I believe, actually aspired to the high office of priesthood!" Eli was evidently enjoying himself. "It would have been better, had he died. Yes, far better."

The Curé, with an effort, drew himself up in his chair. That terrible sensation of heaviness and tension was beginning again in his head. When it came, he felt in a sort of mental fog. Now he fought it off.

"Died?" he repeated. "Was he so ill, then? Sit down, Eli, and tell me all about it."

With a humble gesture of thanks, Eli perched himself on the edge of a stiff-backed, hard wooden chair.

"Monsieur le Curé, I thought he was already dead when his sister Léontine found him locked up in the Randolph cottage. It was not my fault. Léontine will not believe it. But how could I know that the boy had been associated with the Lajoies, that he was still in the house? Indeed, he might have died there of cold, had it not been for Léontine—and a mongrel dog. For Madame Pednaud was very angry with Amyas. He had gone out on the night—when we arrested the Lajoies—having told her a sacrilegious lie about his immortal soul. And he had not come back. When the Sheriff—whom she had thought in Quebec—and who had slept in the jail that night—came home in the morning, she told him about Amyas. So Madame Pednaud gave Léontine a piece of her mind about her brother, when she met her, later on, at the Central Store in the village.

The girl was very angry. The sin of anger, Monsieur le Curé, is a failing of hers. So off she went through the snow to Cap à l'Ours. My wife, who is of Madame Randolph's household during the summer, has a key to the back door of the cottage. But Léontine did not find Amyas in the kitchen, nor in the dining room, either. She was about to go away again, when, upstairs—imagine that to yourself, Monsieur le Curé—upstairs in the very room in which Mademoiselle Anne herself sleeps—Léontine heard the whining of a dog. And so, you see, Monsieur le Curé, when I went to the cottage, about an hour later, to make a list of the missing things, I found a wild young woman, crying and swearing, and trying to warm back to life a half-frozen, unconscious boy. It was very painful. Léontine is a good girl in some ways. She helps my wife with the children. But—am I to blame because her precious brother gets a sickness of the lungs and lies for weeks, talking and talking nonsense—in my house? Yes, indeed—in my house! I could not sleep in peace for many weeks. Twice Monsieur le Docteur Lapointe sent for Monsieur Bienvenu, the Curé of Cap à l'Ours, to give the last sacraments. The house, my house, has been upset and very uncomfortable all winter. For there was also that bad-tempered dog. Imagine, they call it 'Mille Vaches.' The right name for a dog is Cæsar, or the name of some other heathen god—it being not right to call dumb animals by the name of a saint. Well, the dog howled, and Amyas talked and talked in his fever; and my wife was awake often at night; and I—I was, as I have said, very uncomfortable. But I did not complain. Never."

He was breathless with the exciting tale of his own wrongs and his own virtues.

"And now?" asked the Curé, after a moment's silence.

"Oh, now, Monsieur le Curé, now I get more rest. Amyas goes out a little. Doctor Lapointe says that he must do no work this winter. So there is another idle mouth for me to feed. Not that I grudge it. Of course not."

"But what was Amyas doing in the cottage of Madame Randolph?" the Curé asked. His head was getting worse. He could not stand the sound of this man's sharp, acid voice very much longer. Eli lifted both hands again in a gesture of helplessness.

"Do I know? Indeed, Monsieur le Curé, I do not. At first the doctor would not permit me to talk with the boy. Then, when I tried to listen at the door while he raved in his fever, Léontine thrust me away with a dirty broom. Now when he could talk if he wanted to, he will not say anything. Monsieur le Shérif is wondering whether he ought not to arrest him and hold him, with the Lajoies, for the District Judge next month."

"He must not do that," interposed the Curé, quickly. "Tell him I said so. I will see Amyas myself." He held out his hand. "Thank you, Eli. Au revoir. And tell the other two men in the hall that I am really too tired to talk with them just now. Later, perhaps."

When he had heard the front door close behind the steps of all three visitors, the Curé dragged himself up from his chair, went to his desk in the window, and unlocked a lower drawer. From the back of it, he drew out a small, worn book—bound in tattered, faded black. With a wry smile he lifted the book to his face, and sniffed.

"The old smell is gone," he said, half aloud. "And it is the only inheritance that I can give to the boy; the only thing that once belonged to his father. And his father was an honest, upright man. It may mean something to Amyas. I had meant to give it to him the day he entered the Seminary—but now——"

He sighed and went back to his chair by the stove, where he fell asleep, holding in his hand the old Prayer-book that had once belonged to the grandmother of young Amyas Dufour.

CHAPTER SIX

The Outlaw

On Sunday the parish church at Bonne Rivière was full to overflowing. After so many months of absence, Monsieur le Curé was to be in his own pulpit again. The air was heavy with a smell of unwashed, steaming, heavy clothes, mingled with a faint odor of incense. The Curé was not yet strong enough to say two masses, so Monsieur Bienvenu, after an early mass in his own church at Cap à l'Ours, had come over to Bonne Rivière to sing the high mass, so that the Curé might have his breakfast before preaching. Every eye in the church was fixed on the thin, pale face, as the Curé sat in the chancel, while the high mass began.

He felt unusually clear in his head this morning. The old haze had disappeared. And he glanced through the crowded church, picking out one familiar face after another, until his eyes wandered back again to the sanctuary—to the acolytes, and to Monsieur Bienvenu in his white vestments, for it was the third Sunday after Easter.

There they all were, the boys and younger men whom he had trained in the duties of the sanctuary. Now the thurifer was coming out of the sacristy with the incense for the reading of the Gospel. There was something unfamiliar about him. Why, it must be young Chrétien Ratté! But for years Amyas Dufour had always been thurifer at the high mass on Sundays. The outline of his head and shoulders was to the Curé as much an expected part of the ceremony as the sacred vessels on the altar. And now Amyas was not there.

The Curé swept the church again with his eyes, up and down the center aisle, then the side aisles. Yes, there was the Martel pew; and there was Corinne with her oldest child. Léontine, too. But no sign of Amyas. The choir had almost finished the Credo. The Curé got up from his seat in the chancel, walked down into the nave, and climbed the narrow, twisting flight of steps that led up to the pulpit, perched high on the north wall of the nave. It made him dizzy to look down at the mass of upturned faces.

Before he began his sermon, he had something unpleasant to say. Better say it first, and have done with it. So, very briefly, he told them that during his absence, as everyone knew, the summer cottage of an American family had been entered during the night. It belonged to people who had always been friends of Bonne Rivière, friends of the Orphelinat, friends of his own. He would read a list of the missing things, beginning—here he allowed his set lips to relax a little—beginning with two bottles of champagne. These things must be restored or else paid for. He, as the priest of the parish, felt responsible. Therefore, the men who had broken into the cottage that night in February, would kindly come and give their names to him at the Presbytère. If they had in their possession anything belonging to the Randolph family, they would bring it with them. Or be ready to make restitution in money for whatever damage they had done. Then he said, *"Au nom du Père, du Fils, et du Saint Esprit, Amen,"* and went on with his sermon.

By the time mass was over and he had been waylaid and ceremoniously greeted by all those parishioners who lived at a distance and who had had no opportunity of welcoming him home until now, Monsieur le Curé was very weary indeed. Leaning on the arm of his colleague, Monsieur Bienvenu, he walked across from the side door of the church to the Presbytère. He turned into his study, leaving Monsieur Bienvenu to go into the dining room, where coffee was waiting for him. His old housekeeper, who came in to poke up the fire in the stove, looked at him anxiously.

"Monsieur le Curé should rest until dinner," she said. "I will send away the young men who are waiting in the hall."

"No; by no means. It will not take long—and I think I know what they have come for. But—" he wagged a warning finger at her—"but you will remember to have been blind when you let them in. If you know their names, forget them."

She nodded, understanding and amused.

For the next ten minutes Monsieur le Curé was happy. He still held the confidence of his people. He, as their priest, could still call, and they came, no matter how unpleasant the coming might be.

Two very uncomfortable young men, they were. And the third one, so they said, would have been with them, had he not gone over Sunday to Sainte Agnès. They had, at home, such and such small things, which they would bring to the Presbytère next Sunday—a pack of cards, a half-empty box of cigarettes, some illustrated papers, and the like. And if Monsieur le Curé would tell them to what extent they were indebted to him in the matter of money, they would see what they could do to discharge their indebtedness. If not at once, then as soon as the *étrangers* came and they could get work again.

"Good," said Monsieur le Curé. "I suppose that none of you have made your Easter Duties?"

No, they had not dared. If they had gone to confession, they must have made restitution before they could get absolution, and they had—they had not been so well acquainted with Monsieur le Curé Bienvenu. So they preferred to wait for their own priest's return.

"Then you may come to me next Saturday. So there were only three of you, eh?"

The two young men became suddenly very ill at ease. They shuffled with their feet. The priest understood. He knew better than to push them too far.

"On second thought," he said, with that friendly smile of his that had found the way to the hearts of so many stubborn penitents, "I will withdraw that question. It is no business of mine to force you either to lie or to incriminate another person. And I am glad that you came, my children. More glad than you can perhaps understand."

They went out, stamping clumsily down the bare hall. The outer door closed. And the Curé reached for his pipe. He had it just between his eager fingers when he heard soft steps again in the hall. With a sigh of disappointment, he put his pipe aside.

"Entrez," he called. Then, as the steps hesitated, "Mais entrez donc, mon enfant."

In the doorway stood Amyas Dufour.

"Good God," thought Amyas, "how sick he looks!"

"My poor child! poor, unhappy child!" thought the Curé. "How thin he is—how sad—how broken!"

But neither one divined the thoughts of the other.

"Ah, Amyas," said the priest, "bonjour, mon ami! Here I am again, as you see. And how have you been? I heard that you had been ill."

Amyas nodded. The Curé—this man who had once been his friend—was making it very hard for him.

"I have come, Monsieur le Curé," Amyas began, finally, "because of what you said in the pulpit this morning."

"Ah, you liked the sermon then. I am flattered."

"No, not the sermon." Oh, why did he not help a little, instead of sitting there, looking so deathly sick and pretending that he knew nothing at all? "What you said—about the stealing from—from the house—the house of Mademoiselle—I mean of Madame Randolph."

"You mean that you were with that crowd of young men—that foolish, drinking crowd? Why—why——"

"No, Monsieur le Curé." Amyas was standing more erect, his thin, stooped shoulders were squared. But his hands were shaking so that he had to hold them clasped in front of him. "What have I to do with—with those! But I went into the house without permission, and I took something there—something that did not belong to me."

"Oh, my son, I am disappointed. You were tempted suddenly, I suppose. You took something of value? Well, after all, one can always make restitution. One can repent. And the Sacred Heart of our Blessed Lord is merciful, always."

But Amyas made no answer. He only shook his head. The Curé was puzzled.

"Come, my son. What did you take? I have a list here of the missing things. Bring it back to me, and——"

Amyas' dull, toneless voice interrupted him.

"I cannot tell you what I took. And—" he added, between his shut teeth, for he felt that he was defying the representative of Almighty God Himself—"and I cannot give it back."

"You mean you have lost it?"

Amyas' lips twitched in a sudden smile; his hand went to his breast.

"No, I have not lost it." Then, as if repeating a lesson painfully learned, "I am a thief. I took something that did not belong to me. And I will not—give it back."

"Then, at least, tell me what it is, my son." The Curé's voice was kind now. It almost broke through Amyas' guard. But tell? He couldn't. The Curé wouldn't understand. How could a priest—who must never even look at a woman—understand? Besides, he might laugh. And if he laughed—Amyas felt he could kill him, priest or no priest. So he repeated dully:

"I cannot tell you what it is."

Now Monsieur le Curé was a very sick man. He had had a very hard, tiresome morning, and the dizzy, fog-like sensation in his head was beginning again. He lost patience. What was the matter with this boy for whom he had done so much?

The tone of his voice changed. Amyas braced himself to meet it. He rather welcomed it, for it was easier to meet than kindness.

"You do not understand your position, my son," the Curé said. "You have stolen; you have committed mortal sin. No priest can give you absolution unless you promise to make restitution. And yet restitution you will not make. And until you do make it, absolution will be denied you. You cannot make your communion. You will be self-excommunicated. Cut off from God by your own wilful act."

"I understand," he said.

"But there will be other results," the Curé went on, for he was growing angry now. "Not to your immortal soul, but to your worldly reputation. People in the parish will notice that you are not receiving the sacraments. I cannot allow an unrepentant sinner to serve at God's altar any longer. People will notice that, too."

"I do not mind—now, Monsieur le Curé. I told Monsieur le Curé Bienvenue, as soon as I got well—that I would not serve at high mass any more."

The boy's utter callousness baffled the priest. He fell back on threats. His head was whirling; he must get through with this painful interview as soon as possible.

"I have heard also from Monsieur Martel," he said, standing up and walking nervously to and fro; "heard that you are suspected of having been intimately associated with the Lajoies and their presence that February night in the Randolph house. I know, now, that these suspicions have some foundation. The Sheriff is talking of arresting you. Even if he does not do so, people will still think you guilty. What will you do? Who will give you work?"

As he walked up and down, his eyes fell on the old Prayer-book that he had left lying on his desk. He picked it up. And with the touch of its worn leather, came memories of the day, so many years ago, when he had found Amyas and his sister, neglected, half starved, almost brutalized, living in that distant farmhouse with a dead mother and a dead father. All his anger evaporated. He crossed the room and put his arm around the boy's shoulder. He was shocked to feel how the bones stuck out from the thin layers of flesh.

"Tell me all about it, Amyas," he begged. Then, taking up the old Prayer-book, he showed it to the boy. "I had intended giving you this on the day you entered the Seminary to begin your studies for the priesthood." Amyas' shoulders winced under the priest's hand, but he kept silence. That was the only thing to do—to say nothing. "It belonged to your father. I found it clasped in his dead hand—on the day when I came to take Léontine and you away from Grand Fond. I have never opened it. I wanted to pass it on to you untouched—your only inheritance—the only thing I can give you that belonged to your father. He was, so I have heard, peculiar in some ways. But no one ever questioned his uprightness—his honesty. Take it, now. I feel somehow as if this were a most important time in your life, although I cannot understand it. But God often leads us in mysterious ways. Take the book, Amyas. It comes directly through my hands from your father's hands to your own. Take it. And then sit down here, and tell me all about the—the things that are troubling you—the things that are endangering your immortal soul."

Amyas stared down at the old book in the priest's hands. Then, with a sigh, he shook his head and turned away. Without another word—without even saluting his priest, he marched out of the study, with his head up. And the Curé watched him go, hopelessly. What could he do!

In the hall he heard the faint welcoming yelp of a dog.

A month later, when he lay dying, watching with dimming eyes the thin, brown hands of Monsieur Bienvenu, that were anointing him for the last time —*"per istam Sanctam Unctionem"*—he gave thanks to the Sacred Heart of His Master that had put into his own heart the impulse to follow young Amyas Dufour out into the hall of the Presbytère on that Sunday afternoon of early spring. He had gone with the old Prayer-book still in his hands. And he had found Amyas with his hand on the latch of the door, staring down at a tattered, excited mongrel that was leaping around him and trying to lick his muddy boots.

"Excuse his barking, Monsieur le Curé," said Amyas. His voice sounded so old, so hopeless, that the priest bent down to pat the dog, in order to hide the unexpected tears in his own eyes. The dog snapped at the Curé's outstretched hand. Amyas gave him a friendly kick, and the dog fawned on the boy again. "He bites," added Amyas, "because he is afraid—afraid of everybody—except me. But he is a good dog. He saved my life. And he's about the only friend I've got now."

"Not quite, my son," the priest interposed. "I came out after you to tell you so. Here——" He offered Amyas what he held in his hand. "Here, take this book. After all, it is yours by right. Who am I to make conditions about it?" Then, as Amyas' fingers closed eagerly about the old book, the Curé laid his hands on the boy's thin shoulders. "I did not know your father very well. He was said to be an obstinate man. A man who in spite of ridicule held fast to the things that he believed to be true. One might not agree with him; but one could not help admiring him. I suppose that I ought to have told you more about him during all these past years. But I put it off, intending to tell you when I gave you the book, on the day when—when—and now it is too late."

Amyas nodded.

"And now it is too late," he repeated. "I understand. I shall never be a priest, Monsieur le Curé. I am not good enough. But I thank you just the same. If I could—could have been a priest—I should have prayed the Good God to make me a priest like you. Salut, Monsieur le Curé. Bonne chance!"

The priest lifted his right hand. He wanted to give the boy his blessing. But Amyas, ashamed of his own emotion, had slipped through the door, and was hurrying down the steps of the Presbytère.

The Curé, standing in the doorway, looked after the thin, shabby, erect figure.

A boy—even with his nineteen years scarcely a man yet—and a dog—a mongrel that snapped at everyone—and an old Prayer-book that had lain in a dead man's hand. Not much to face a hard world. The Curé could not know that Amyas had one other possession, worn close to his skin, under his patched blue flannel shirt, a tattered, stained old golf glove. Nothing "of any great value," indeed, as worldly possessions are estimated on a list of stolen things; but to the thief that had stolen it, a sign manual of courage, a banner of bravery, won at a great price, the price of his own immortal soul. An abiding memory of a half-grasped ideal; the ideal of dogged determination to win fairly, even on the last green, in spite of difficulties and in the teeth of physical pain.

As the Curé watched Amyas passing through the little wire gate of the Presbytère, he raised his right hand again, and over the departing figure traced the sign of the cross.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Wages of Sin

"AMYAS," said Léontine to her brother, the day after the funeral of Monsieur le Curé of Bonne Rivière, "you ought to get out of this. Why don't you go to Quebec and get a job there, until all this trouble has blown over? Nobody will give you work here now. Besides, the Lajoies were released today by the District Judge. You've never told us how you got mixed up with them. But I don't think they like you very much. And, as you know, they have black hearts."

"Yes," assented Amyas, listlessly. "I have seen them."

The snow had begun to melt. In another month it would be almost gone, and then the "season"—the time of the *étrangers*—would begin. Corinne and Léontine would stay with the Gagnons, Corinne's people; and Eli's house would, so they hoped, find a tenant for the summer. Amyas would have to go somewhere.

But go? And now? He could not endure that. Why, the summer was the one time of the whole year to which he had always looked forward as far back as he could remember. Everything was changed now, of course. But still——

"I don't want to go away," he muttered.

The youngest of Corinne's children began to wail for its supper, and Léontine left Amyas sitting on the front steps of Eli's house in the warm sun. Mille Vaches, curled up at his feet, laid his battered head on Amyas' boot.

Amyas felt dazed. Everything seemed so unreal. His whole life was out of joint. It was not so much what people whispered behind his back; or the way the Sheriff glared at him whenever they met on the village street. Nor did he bother greatly about the covert remarks that Eli made at the supper table; suggestions of the final, hideous end of young men who began by consorting with thieves, who would not work, and who ended on the gallows. Worse than all this was the sense of loss that invaded his inmost soul whenever he passed the parish church, or slunk in there, once in a while, to sit dully, hopelessly, in one of the most distant pews, staring at the high altar, the altar at which he had served for so many years, first as a mere torch bearer, and then slowly working his way up to the distinguished honor of thurifer. Why, he knew the old censer that hung in the sacristy—knew every scratch on it—knew how the chains sometimes caught in the guide rings—knew just what to do in order to keep the burning charcoal from spilling out on the floor of the sanctuary. And now—he would never hold it in his hands again.

On Sundays he did not go to church at all. And in a community in which everyone except the sick and bedridden goes to mass, this was noticeable; this insured rather constant and caustic comment. But he could not bear to see other boys serving in his place. They made so many stupid mistakes. He had always done better than that.

Of all the religious practices that had formed so great, so constant a part of his past life, only one remained. At night he knelt down at his bedside and said one Our Father and one Hail Mary. The rosary was too long; he could not keep his mind on the different Mysteries. But as he knelt, he would hold between his hands the old Prayer-book that the Curé had given him. He never opened it; the print was too small to read, anyway, in the light of his single candle. But he liked to have it in his hands. And as he knelt, pressing his breast against the side of the bed, he could feel the thing that he wore inside his shirt, next to the skin. He had tried at first to fasten it to his scapula; but the string had broken, and he had thrown the scapula away.

Never before in his life had he felt so much alone as on this warm, spring afternoon, sitting there with Mille Vaches, on the steps of Eli's house. Since his illness, he had never gone near the Orphelinat. He had an idea that Sister Onésime would slam the little lattice of the front door in his face.

And now the Presbytère was closed to him also. Since the Sunday on which the Curé had given him the old Prayer-book, he had never gone to see his former friend. And yet he knew that he might have gone, had he wished to do so. But he had kept putting it off, afraid of the Curé's questions, ashamed of his own unworthiness; yet anxious to pour out the whole story of his unhappiness. And now—as the Curé had said—it was too late, indeed.

Yesterday, old Pednaud, in his cocked hat and streaming black ribbons, had sat on the box of the high black hearse that had carried the body of the Curé of Bonne Rivière up the hill to the cemetery. Amyas had not followed with the long black line of mourners—everyone in the village who could walk—all saying the *"De profundis"* in low, muffled voices. Just before the Requiem Mass, in the parish church, Amyas had hung about the door of the sacristy. Monsieur Bienvenu of Cap à l'Ours was to sing the mass. Amyas had waited for him, paying no attention to the giggling comments of the other boys, who were hurrying in to put on their black cassocks. And at last, Monsieur Bienvenu had come. He had stopped to speak with Amyas. And it was strange, now one came to think of it, that he knew, without asking, why Amyas was there.

"Ah, my son," he had said, looking at Amyas with those deep, far-seeing eyes of his, "you would like to serve at the altar once again, would you not?—for the love of him who was your father in God—to be thurifer—and swing the incense, perhaps—the incense with which I cense his bier. But, my son—that is impossible. You know it, yourself. Still, I am glad to know that you wished to do it." Then he had lifted Amyas' bowed head and had looked straight into his brimming eyes. "You have paid a high price for something—something that I do not understand. If ever you feel that you made a mistake, come and tell me about it. Meanwhile, a brave man does not lament over the price he has had to pay. He pays it—and goes on to something else."

Then he had gone on, into the sacristy, and Amyas had been left alone outside. He had gone into the little enclosure behind the church, where stands the big statue of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, surrounded then by muddy melting snow. And there, at the base of the statue, he had sat alone, with his head in his hands, trying to pray for the Curé's soul—trying to shut out the sound of the voices and the deep booming notes of the organ inside the church.

At that time he had thought of going away—of trying to forget, and of beginning all over again in some new place. But in all his life he had been scarcely twenty miles away from Bonne Rivière. He had no friends anywhere outside his own village. Besides, he was not quite well yet. He still spat a little blood when he climbed a hill too quickly.

Now, the day after the Curé's funeral, as Amyas sat on the front steps of Eli's house, Mille Vaches lifted his head from his master's foot, and growled. Amyas looked up, and saw Corinne standing behind him, holding a letter in her hand.

"From Mademoiselle Anne, Amyas," she said. "She always writes at this time to tell us when to have the house ready. You know what funny French she writes, God bless her! Often we have laughed over her letters." She held the envelope out to Amyas. "You read it to me. Léontine is with the baby. And I don't know what's the matter with my eyes, but I can't read even big print without their hurting. Eli promised to get me some new glasses in Quebec."

She sat down in a chair at Amyas' side, shading her eyes from the sun, pressing one hand against her eyes, as though they were acutely painful. Amyas, below her on the top step, was glad that she could not see his face. He opened the letter and began reading.

Anne Randolph, in her labored French, wrote that Corinne was to have the cottage ready on June the fifteenth. Her mother and two sisters would arrive with her. "Monsieur Robin" would join them as soon as his law-school examinations were over. Corinne would be glad to hear that he would be finished with school now, and next year would be in a law office, practicing law for himself—just like Monsieur Pamphile Florian, the *Avocat* at Cap à l'Ours. As for her father, Colonel Randolph, he would not be with them this summer—or ever again. Perhaps Corinne had seen all about it in the newspapers. She herself was so tired of newspapers; they said such unkind things. The truth was that Madame her mother had been given a divorce from Colonel Randolph.

"A divorce!" interrupted Corinne. She nodded understandingly. "I can make a guess why. I have not been Madame's maid all these years for nothing. Perhaps she will marry again."

"Marry again!" exclaimed Amyas, indignantly. "And her husband still alive! Cette vieille toupie!"

"Elle n'est pas, pourtant, trop laide," commented Corinne. "And in America, to the *étrangers*—it is no sin."

"Adultery is adultery anywhere," persisted Amyas. Then Corinne kicked him softly in the back, and he went on reading.

Corinne was to buy such and such supplies—a list of them was inclosed. Anne hoped that they had had a good winter—"pas trop de misère." And she was looking forward to seeing them all soon.

Amyas folded up the letter and handed it back.

"But no," exclaimed Corinne. "You did not read all. There is a part there on the last page about you. I could see your name. Read it."

"Read it yourself," Amyas' voice was choked. He jumped up from the steps and almost ran down the path to the main road. Mille Vaches, with a snarl at Corinne, dashed after him.

Corinne, puzzled, and shaking her head, went into the kitchen.

"Here, Léontine," she said, "leave the baby a minute. Read me this piece, here, in Mademoiselle's letter. Amyas would not read it. Perhaps the words were too long, and he couldn't."

So Léontine read aloud.

> Eli wrote me about the men who broke into our cottage. I am glad to know that nothing of value was stolen. But I am bitterly disappointed about Amyas. What Eli writes does not seem possible. You know how fond I have always been of Amyas; how absolutely I have trusted him. Why, there is nothing in our house that I would not have given him if he had asked for it—except, perhaps, that old putter of mine.

"Putter?" interrupted Corinne. "What is that, then, that she loves too dearly to give away?"

"I will ask Amyas," said Léontine. "Surely, it cannot be that this—this put-ter was the one thing he did want. Then Mademoiselle says:

> Of course if he really cannot be trusted, as Eli writes, perhaps we had better not have him around the cottage, this year, although I shall miss him terribly. But I don't want to have any more trouble this summer than I can help. There's going to be trouble enough as it is."

Léontine looked up into Corinne's puzzled face.

"Poor Amyas," she said. "And you asked him to read that aloud? Ah, Corinne, if Mademoiselle Anne knew only how sad my brother will be, she would give him even her old put-ter!"

CHAPTER EIGHT

Defeat

Anne Randolph always tried to forget that particular summer. From the very beginning of it, everything seemed, somehow, to be out of joint. She did not realize that she was no longer the impressionable girl of twenty who had once been so fascinated by the new, yet simple, life of the little Canadian village. She was twenty-nine now. Ever since her mother's illness, at Cap à l'Ours, she had been the head of the household. And although most males do not realize it, housekeeping is a business that knows no Sundays, no holidays, from one year's end to another. If you can avoid it in summer, then you can get through the winter's deadly routine. But if that routine persists for three hundred and sixty-five days of the year, then it can, at the last, poison you—fret you—anger and depress you—until you are not fit to live in a house, much less to keep one.

So, to Anne, the summers at Cap à l'Ours seemed less stimulating, less relaxing, than they used to be. To take a picnic supper and drive up to Sainte Agnès, to build a fire there, to eat on the damp grass while the moon rose over the lake below—all this had seemed fascinating enough years ago. But now, somehow, it was pleasanter to eat at one's own table and to have a foursome of bridge in the living room afterwards. Nowadays no one, not even Henry Aspinwall himself, could have induced Anne to sit on the lawn in front of the Aspinwall cottage from seven until ten making *sucre* over a scorching fire—maple sugar gave her indigestion anyhow—and singing *"Alouette"* and *"Que les beaux jours sont courts."* In fact, as one summer followed another, the *jours* were becoming less and less *beaux,* and not *courts,* but long.

Of course, there was always Henry. He never changed. He was like a pleasant, familiar winter coat, that one put away in the spring and then forgot all about until one needed it again. He was doing quite well, his mother said, on a newspaper; he had even written a book—a book of verses—that had been "very well received." It was, as Anne well knew,—having been given an "author's copy"—dedicated to "A.B.R." The verse wasn't much in itself, but after all, Henry had become an integral part of every summer. His presence was a sort of reassurance about her own attractions, that made her a little less critical when a dozen young cubs, with whose elder sisters she had played golf, and men whom she didn't even know by name buzzed around her dark-haired sister Eleanor, or muddled up the veranda with banjoes and mandolins around the blonde Mary, who was already encroaching on Eleanor's pet preserves, although she was not to "come out" until next winter.

Anne, in her letter to Corinne, had written that she did not want to have any more *misère* that summer than was necessary, for she expected trouble, anyhow. She had not dared tell her mother just what the expected *misère* was. And she dreaded the moment when Mrs. Randolph should discover that her divorced husband had not only united himself in Holy Matrimony with the clinging, admiring Canadian woman who ran the Habitant Shop during the summer at Bouchard's Hotel and a Gift Shop in Toronto during the winter, but that he was actually determined to spend his usual summer holiday in helping his new wife in her business enterprise at Cap à l'Ours. It was too appalling! Bouchard's was a center of gossip, anyway. The dear old maiden ladies who came there year after year had probably watched, step by step, the development of the "affair" between Miss Miller of the Habitant Shop and that handsome Colonel Randolph, whose wife did not understand him. Now, her own father might be living at the hotel—at the hotel that was the chief center of so-called social life at Cap à l'Ours—the one place except the golf club where you "met people." And Anne, his daughter, wouldn't be able to set foot in the place—couldn't go to the big Dominion Day Tea that old Mrs. Featherstone always gave or to any of the other regular functions without butting into him—him and his wife. Meanwhile, Madame Randolph the First—people would surely say that her husband had divorced her because of her domineering ways—she would be trying to maintain the position that she had fought for summer after summer in a cottage not half a mile from the hotel where her former husband was stopping. No wonder that Anne expected *misère* that summer.

There were household troubles, too. Corinne, on whom Anne had depended for so long, began to make all sorts of silly mistakes in her cooking. Sometimes her pastry was absolutely uneatable. She got the ingredients of dishes all mixed up. Indeed, if it had not been for the capable Léontine, Anne would have been almost helpless. But Léontine became a perfect tower of strength. Anne began to wonder whether it might not be a good idea to take her home in the autumn as her own personal maid, for Léontine had learned to speak English fairly well.

The *misère* that Anne dreaded did not begin all at once. Indeed, the last weeks of June and early July were unexpectedly delightful. Her golf game was steadier than usual; she looked forward to winning the woman's championship in August for the eighth time. Moreover, the golf club had been enlarged. People took tea there of an afternoon now. Several cottages had been built during the winter and were now occupied by new, pleasant people. The Laird at Mont Sainte Marie Manor was planning to give a garden party. One met him everywhere, with his stiff straw hat and his silver-handled stick, even at the dullest teas, at which he sedulously fed the old ladies and timid spinsters who stood about in the corners of the room. During the summer he always blossomed out—got into touch with his own kind again. Often he had confided to Anne how horrible the winters were—how discouraged he became—shut up for so many months with "an alien race of low intelligence"—and getting more and more depressed every day.

She had been deeply distressed by the news of Monsieur le Curé's death. It seemed as though another link had been snapped that connected her with the happiness of past summers. But this loss had, in a sense, brought her a new friend; for Monsieur Bienvenu, the Curé of Cap à l'Ours, had been able to interest her in the new brick church that he was trying to build in the village on the site of the old wooden structure, where the fire had so suddenly stopped many summers ago. Listening to his perfect, beautifully modulated French, Anne had always supposed that he had been born in France, until, one afternoon on the Randolphs' veranda, he had told her that he came of peasant stock—that his father had been sexton or *bedeau* of a little church at Perce in the Gaspé peninsula. After that he had interested Anne more and more, for while the Curé of Bonne Rivière had borne plainly enough the traces of his childhood environment, this other priest, who spoke such perfect French, had the manners of a Chesterfield, and would not have seemed or even felt out of place in a salon of the Quartier Saint Germain. Yet Anne had heard, from Corinne and others, what a firm hold he had won on the affections of his people at Cap à l'Ours because of his simplicity, his kindness, his understanding heart; and above all else, his innate goodness. With him, and with her old friends at the Orphelinat, the Mother Superior and Sister Onésime, Anne often discussed Amyas. But they could give her no help. The two nuns only shook their heads sadly when his name was mentioned, while Monsieur Bienvenu said, "He is fighting his own devils in his own way. All that we can do is to let him alone—and keep on loving him."

Anne did make one or two attempts to see Amyas. But he avoided her. He was driving one of Monsieur Pednaud's spare horses that summer, in an old rattling *planche,* and sat for hours at the foot of the hill below Bouchard's Hotel, waiting for a chance fare, his head bent and his hands hanging over the dashboard. Often Anne passed him while he was driving some new summer visitor to the links or to Bonne Rivière; but always he looked the other way. And Anne, believing that he was ashamed to meet her eyes, put him out of her mind, reluctantly. She told herself often enough that he was nothing but an orphan habitant boy who had betrayed her confidence and no longer merited her interest; but hitherto he had always been part of her happy life at Cap à l'Ours, and without him, the summer seemed incomplete. Besides, the caddie that she had now was dull, often cheeky; fooled with her clubs when she was not looking, and did not know a brassy from a midiron.

In spite of all this, one bright, clear, summer day followed another, until the end of July. Mrs. Randolph, more querulous, more sensitive than ever, had found, to her delight, that most Canadians and many Americans did not read the newspapers of her own small eastern town. People asked when her husband was expected, and she smiled, and murmured something unintelligible. She had felt that she ought to tell Mrs. Aspinwall about her divorce, but that imposing woman had been very cordial, unusually so, indeed, and Mrs. Randolph hesitated, not knowing what Mrs. Aspinwall's views were on the subject of divorce. Anne could have told her. She knew the uncompromising, conservative Protestantism of the Aspinwall family only too well. Old Mr. Aspinwall, Henry's father, had always been a professed admirer of Anne's. She had to play golf with him two or three times each year, and she had listened often enough, while waiting to drive from the second tee, to the old barrister's denunciations of modern wickedness. If she had failed to appear of a Sunday at the morning service in the little Union Church, Mr. Aspinwall would hold up the entire golf course by refusing to put-out until he had assured himself that Anne had not been deserting the Protestant services of the Union Chapel for the "popish practices" of the new little Anglican Church that had actually been consecrated by a Bishop in cope and mitre only the year before, and that was now seducing a few foolish women away from the results of the Blessed Reformation by vestments and candles and daily masses. Under such circumstances, Anne would agree never to set foot in this new abode of the Scarlet Woman if only Mr. Aspinwall would hurry up and—put!

So Mrs. Randolph was fairly happy. The two younger girls had as many boys about as there were picnics. And Anne had her golf. And, as usual, Henry Aspinwall also was expected by the beginning of August.

And then, suddenly, within a single week, everything blew up.

It began on the day Robin came. He had been staying with some of his Harvard law-school friends and did not reach Cap à l'Ours until the end of July.

Anne drifted into his room while he was unpacking.

"There's my mascot, Anne," he said, placing at the back of his desk a small doll dressed in blue, with rather faded red trimmings. "I took it with me in my pocket during my last examinations—and I got through—though I never expected to. And now I'm done with exams—except for the Bar Examination this autumn. It's fun to see all our old friends here again." He was excited, pleased with himself, and with everyone. "You know, Anne, there's something peculiar about this place. I come up here every summer, and I've almost forgotten the names of the people that were such intimate friends of mine ten months ago. But after I've been with them for a few days—why, they sort of grow into my life again, and it seems as if I were going to stay here with them always. Then autumn comes, I have to go; and leaving them is like pulling teeth. But pretty soon I forget about them—until I come back. And then the whole queer thing begins all over again. It's funny, Anne, when you come to think of it! But of all the places I've been in, I've never known one quite like this. Other places I've always been willing to leave—glad to leave sometimes. But I've never wanted to go away from here. I've always wanted to stay longer. It's funny, I tell you! What a good-looking girl Léontine is these days!"

Anne did not interrupt him. He was always like this when he first came; like a jolly, selfish boy, returning to some playground where he has always had a good time and where he expects to go on enjoying himself.

He was straightening his mascot, his Orphan at the back of his desk, when from down-stairs came the sound of a sharp cry, as of someone in great pain.

"What's that?" exclaimed Anne, hurrying to the door. "It sounded as if it came from the kitchen."

"Léontine," cried Robin, and dashed off down the stairs.

Anne followed him more slowly. The abruptness of his reaction was rather disturbing.

She found him in the kitchen, bending over Corinne, who was lying back in a chair, her face white, her lips pinched with pain. At her feet, Léontine kneeled. She was stripping off Corinne's stocking, that was damp and steaming.

"Oh, Mademoiselle," she said, looking up at Anne. "It was the kettle of boiling water. Corinne took it off the stove, to pour some water into a pan—to cook an egg for Monsieur Robin—and she—she poured the stream of boiling water from the kettle right over her foot and her leg. Look, Mademoiselle!"

The scalded skin of Corinne's lower leg was puffed and raised. It looked as if, at a touch, it would drop off, like a glove stripped from a hand.

"My first aid kit, Robin.—Get me the picric acid bandages."

When Robin returned with the bandages, Corinne was sitting bent forward in her chair, while Anne knelt beside her, holding her in her arms.

"Oh, why didn't you tell me, Corinne," Anne was saying. "Why didn't you trust me?"

"But I prayed," Corinne was sobbing. "Last winter I made a pilgrimage to the shrine of Saint Jean Baptiste. And of Sainte Anne I asked only one thing. Saint Jean Baptiste—his mother was a friend of Sainte Anne—who was the mother of Our Lady.

I thought that both of them would—And I had faith, Mademoiselle. I said, when I go into the kitchen for the first time this summer, the darkness will lift from my eyes and I shall see again. Then I can cook once more for these people that I love—for you, Mademoiselle—and for Madame, your mother. But the—the darkness did not lift. I thought perhaps I had not had enough faith. So I kept praying. And still—still—I had to feel for everything. And I made mistakes. Oh, I know. And now—and now—I cannot cook for Mademoiselle any more! Even when I was having that last baby, I could go on cooking. But now I cannot fight any more. For I am blind, Mademoiselle—I am blind. And the miracle—my miracle—it has not happened at all."

Anne quieted Corinne as best she could. She bandaged the scalded, raw flesh, but she did not know what to say. Here was a faith and a despair beyond her understanding. It was Robin who somehow understood and helped. The burn in itself was a mere nothing; the loss of an implicit faith was a matter of graver importance. He put his arm around Corinne's quivering shoulders.

"You are wrong about the miracle, Corinne," he said. "Only it may not happen quite as you expected. In Quebec and in Montreal there are great doctors, men who can sometimes open the eyes of the blind. One of them was here last summer, staying with Colonel Blake. We will find him. And if you have to go to Quebec, we will send someone with you. You have been our friend all these years; do you think that we would let you go blind for lack of—a miracle?"

Corinne felt for his hand and kissed it. Robin became at once very uncomfortable. And he was rather relieved when Anne had persuaded Corinne to lie down in one of the empty guest rooms. He turned away, eager to hurry back to unpacking his clothes, when he came face to face with Léontine.

He had seen her only for a few moments, just after his arrival, and in his sister's presence. For the past ten months he had scarcely ever thought of her. But now, with the abrupt finality of a newly established electric circuit, she assumed at once the old familiar relationship of so many past summers. But she was no longer an awkward, emotional girl; she was a woman now, more mature, much less self-conscious than he. She went up to him and put her arms about his neck.

"Ah, my dear," she said, "but you are a good man!" And then she kissed him.

Robin flushed all over his body. He had kissed women enough before, but he had always been the aggressor; he had begun the kissing, and the woman had then either returned or suffered it. Anyway, he felt now that he must make some return. So he caught Léontine toward him, with the same nervous jerk of his arms that he had been accustomed to use on warm spring nights in Cambridge, when he had picked up some girl in Harvard Square and had taken her for an ice-cream soda and a little walk.

To his surprise, Léontine slipped out of his tightening arms without the slightest effort. She put her hands on his shoulders, and looked into his eyes. He felt uneasy now, a little ashamed. What did the girl want, anyway?

"You know, Monsieur Robin," he heard Léontine say in her slow French, slow and distinct so that he could understand every word, "that I have always loved you—always—from the first time I saw you, many summers ago, when you and Madame, your mother, came to Gagnon's house looking for a maid and took away our Corinne. I am not ashamed of that. I cannot help it, can I? But of one thing, Monsieur Robin, I am afraid. I would like you to—to—care for me a little bit—only not too much. For everything in the world I would not hurt you or harm you. And I might have to hurt you if you—if you cared too much. But," she added, with a little catch in her breath, "you do not care—very much, eh,—Monsieur Robin?"

As he returned her long stare, he realized how intensely desirable she was; how clean-cut of feature, how strong of body, and yet how graceful. And how spotlessly neat. He wanted to do something to underline his male domination—to carry her off her feet—to take her for himself whether she would or not. But he knew that she had ten times his physical strength, ten times his poise. She understood herself; and he had never understood himself at all.

"Of course I care, Léontine," he blurted out. "I care a great deal."

She laughed almost happily, and straightened his tie which had become slightly twisted.

"Oo-là-là! That was what I was waiting for—the words of the so-passionate lover. Now I know that you do not make yourself unhappy about me—me who am Madame, your mother's, kitchen maid. So I am content."

Then Robin found the right word at last.

"Kitchen maid!" he spluttered awkwardly. "You may be my mother's maid, Léontine—but you are my friend."

And he held out his hand.

Léontine held his hand in hers for a moment. Then, dropping it, she threw herself into a chair and burst into tears.

"Go away now, please," she sobbed. "Ah, I beg you, Monsieur Robin, go away. I cry because I am so happy—because you say I am your friend." With an abrupt change of mood, she jumped up and came and stood in front of Robin again. "My *friend!*" she said. Then, through her clenched teeth, she added, "And if anyone does you harm—I—I will tear out their lungs with my bare hands. Ha, I too, if I wish, can have a black heart!"

That night at supper, when Léontine waited on the table, Robin noticed that she avoided passing close to his shoulder, and that when he tried to catch her eye she looked away. But she was smiling; and later on, in the kitchen, Robin heard her singing to herself, *"Que les beaux jours sont courts."*

Indeed, Léontine needed all her good nature during the next few days. For on her fell almost the entire burden of the house. Anne persuaded her to let one of Corinne's younger sisters help her with the heavy work, but Léontine bore this intrusion into her absolute domain with ill-concealed dissatisfaction.

Of course Mrs. Randolph complained; said that Anne's housekeeping was sloppy; that they would have done better to go to the hotel for their meals since Corinne was ill. Finally, in early August, they did go to Bouchard's for a single meal. And it was that meal that divided forever the Randolph family into two opposing, disintegrating groups.

Madame La Rochefoucault, the wife of the Provincial Minister of Rivers and Forests, was, without doubt, the most distinguished guest at Bouchard's Hotel. She was a French woman, amusing, witty, enjoying the pulling of provincial political strings, and making a great success also of her pulling. Once a year, in August, she always gave a large luncheon party at the hotel, in a special tent, or marquis that came down from Quebec with the caterer's men and was set up on the hotel lawn. To be included in Madame le Ministre's luncheon was a distinction that was only accorded to those summer residents who either had cottages of their own or who could prove that they had been coming to Cap à l'Ours in the summer for at least five years. Younger people were not invited. The Randolphs had always been asked.

This summer, during the first week of August, three envelopes arrived promptly by post, invitations for Madame Randolph, for Monsieur Robin, and for Mademoiselle Anne. This was all as it should be. But the day before the luncheon, Anne was called to the telephone—a new institution at Cap à l'Ours—and she heard the soft voice of Madame La Rochefoucault saying, "Ah, it is you, dear Mademoiselle. Pray convey my compliments to your dear mother, and beg her to excuse me for not having sent to Colonel Randolph also a luncheon invitation. But I am dispatching one immediately."

Before Anne could think up anything to say that might explain matters, Madame had rung off.

Now Anne had heard that her father had threatened to come to Cap à l'Ours that summer, and to stay at Bouchard's with his new wife. But she felt that she would have been told of his presence, had he already arrived. Moreover, Madame La Rochefoucault's invitation, addressed to Colonel Randolph, would be sent of course to the Randolph cottage, and her mother could make some excuse to her hostess for "her husband's" unavoidable absence. Of course, Anne ought to have told her mother about the telephone message. But she and Henry Aspinwall took a long drive that afternoon, and she did not get back until late. Next morning she had a golf game, and only returned to the cottage in time to dress for the luncheon. She took the precaution of asking Léontine whether any letters had come. But none had arrived. Evidently Madame La Rochefoucault had discovered that Colonel and Mrs. Randolph were no longer legally man and wife and, being a clever woman, she had not made any explanation, but simply had not sent the invitation of which she had spoken.

But Anne had reckoned without little Madame Pilote, the postmistress at Cap à l'Ours, who knew more about the private affairs of the *étrangers* than anyone else in the village. Years before she had known of Colonel Randolph's evening promenades with the "English Miss" who kept the Habitant Shop at the hotel. This same English Miss had been at the postoffice that very summer, in early June, in order to explain to Madame Pilote that she was no longer "Miss"; that she was now Mrs. Randolph, and that letters addressed to her as Mrs. Randolph were to be sent to Bouchard's Hotel. Naturally, this had intrigued Madame Pilote, whose niece, Serafine, was one of the waitresses at the hotel and who knew the names of every single guest in the place. Therefore, when Madame Pilote found in the letter box a properly stamped envelope—the small visiting-card size—addressed to Colonel and Mrs. Randolph, she sent it on to the hotel, at which, according to her cousin, Monsieur le Colonel had arrived the night before. Of course, Madame La Rochefoucault's secretary was somewhat at fault. She had had on her invitation list a Colonel and Mrs. Randolph. She had been told to leave out the Colonel. Then she had been told to put him in once more. So, when she sent out the second invitation, she addressed it according to her original list—the most natural thing in the world.

Mrs. Randolph was in unusually good humor as she set off with Anne and Robin for Bouchard's Hotel, in their new two-seated buckboard, by far the best-looking carriage in the place that summer. She was satisfied with her gown; and really, Robin was looking very handsome, indeed. Anne, of course, always seemed a bit dowdy. But then, you couldn't have everything in this world. She was looking forward to Madame La Rochefoucault's luncheon. Probably some distinguished man would take her out.

When the Randolphs reached the steps that led up to the veranda of the hotel, the other guests had already begun to arrive. Madame La Rochefoucault, standing at the top of the steps, was very gracious indeed to Mrs. Randolph. Gracious also to Anne and Robin. But then a puzzled look passed over her face; she seemed to be looking for someone else.

"Monsieur le Colonel has not yet——" she began. But Mrs. Randolph did not understand much French, and just then another guest pressed forward.

Robin and Anne stood together by the veranda railing. There they were joined by Henry Aspinwall. Anne was looking up at Henry, teasing him about his last golf game, and with her back to the road below, when she saw his mouth open in amazement and his hand go up to his head. She glanced around at Robin. He too seemed smitten by sudden dementia.

"For the Lord's sake," stammered Robin, dropping back into a colloquialism of his youth, "look what's here!"

Across the road, coming from one of the hotel cottages, came Colonel Randolph. His mustache, clipped of its former walrus-like proportions, was waxed at the tips. His blue jacket, his white trousers, were perfect. And on his arm came tripping a little fluff of a woman, looking up into his face with an expression of complete trust in his masculine strength.

"They're coming here," stammered Anne, clutching at Henry's coat. "To the luncheon!"

Up the steps they came. And Madame La Rochefoucault, gracious always—Madame who never forgot a face—leaned forward to receive them.

"Ah, Monsieur le Colonel, we forgive you for being a little late since you bring to me another of your so charming daughters. I regret that I did not know that she had already made her début. Otherwise——"

Colonel Randolph was a little overcome. He had been surprised at receiving the invitation, had wanted to refuse, but his new wife did not intend to miss a chance of sitting down at the same table with Madame La Rochefoucault.

"My wife, Madame," he said, a little stiffly, trying to twirl his mustache.

"Oo-là-là!" Madame answered, a little amused, a little angry, and yet too great a lady to be anything but gracious. "You American men are beyond price! I have just received Madame, your wife, and now you present to me still another Madame Randolph. It is somewhat confusing. But——"

She was interrupted by a high-pitched, hysterical shriek. Anne recognized it; so did Robin. They had both heard something very like it, on another August day, some years ago.

Mrs. Aspinwall, dominating and self-possessed, in matronly black, pushed her way through the crowd to Anne.

"Go to your mother at once," she said, crisply. "Make her keep quiet. Tell her that I understand the situation; that I can explain it to our hostess. But your mother must face it calmly. She can carry it off and bring everyone around to her side if she has a little sense. Hurry!"

Anne, followed by Robin and Henry, made their way as quickly as possible toward the door of the hotel. People made room for them, some puzzled, others amused. Everyone of importance at Cap à l'Ours was there; everyone. Even Monsieur le Curé

Bienvenu. The sound of a low moaning led them easily to their mother.

She was sitting in the little hotel parlor, thrown back in a chair, apparently unconscious, although her color was good, her lips red. A few delighted spinster ladies—old inmates of the hotel—were gathered round her. They had not been invited to the luncheon, but they were enjoying themselves none the less. One of them was holding a blue bottle of smelling salts, waving it up and down under Mrs. Randolph's nose.

"Out of this, all of you," said the voice of Mrs. Aspinwall, who had followed Henry into the room. "Yes, I mean you, Grace Witherspoon—and you too, Lucy Carmichael." The spinster ladies peeped, snickered, and fled away. "Make her pull herself together," Mrs. Aspinwall went on, turning to Anne. "I shall go out to Madame La Rochefoucault. She will hold the luncheon for a few moments. But your mother must—she must take her seat at that luncheon table."

She sailed majestically out to the veranda, that was buzzing with the voices of the guests.

But even before Anne bent down over her mother, she knew well enough that Mrs. Randolph would never face the luncheon table. Yet she did try to make her. She pleaded; she grew angry. It was all no use. One precious moment followed another, and still Mrs. Randolph moaned, and fluttered her eyelids, and pressed a hand to her heart, as though in great agony. She did not seem to hear Anne at all. Even when Robin spoke to her, she only opened her eyes a little, and moaned.

"Oh, my son! Oh, my poor heart! Take me home —take me home!"

On the mantelpiece stood a glass of water, hastily brought there by the spinster lady of the smelling salts. Anne picked it up. For a moment she thought of dashing it in her mother's face. But she did not dare. She knew that it would turn the apparently half-conscious woman into a shrieking, furious maniac, who would fill the whole place with her cries and recriminations.

Nothing was of any use.—She beckoned to Robin.

"Go out to Madame La Rochefoucault," she whispered. "Tell her that Mother has had one of her serious attacks of angina, and that we must take her home at once. Lay it on thick. Apologize in your best manner. Only make haste. We can't hold up the luncheon any longer."

But Robin was, in many ways, very like his mother. He had a dread of ridicule; and he had learned to avoid unpleasant situations, not by facing them, but by leaving them as soon as possible. He wasn't going out on that crowded veranda, among all those smiling, critical people. He shook his head. And he lied.

"I'm afraid to leave Mother," he said. "Go yourself, Anne."

Henry Aspinwall who stood at Anne's side boiled with ill-repressed rage. What a coward Robin was! He would not hesitate to let his sister bear the brunt of a situation that he himself was too frightened to meet alone.

"I'll go, Anne," Henry said, touching the girl on the shoulder.

She looked up at him with a light of kindness and of gratitude in her eyes that made him choke with sudden emotion.

"Thank you, Henry," Anne said, holding out her hand. "I might have known that I could always count on you."

"You can count on me always," he answered.

"Yes," said Anne, "I am beginning to understand that."

For the Randolphs, the next half hour was like a bad dream. Anne and Robin sat alone with their mother in the hotel parlor, listening to the footfalls of the guests as they trooped down the hotel steps, out to the big marquis, where the luncheon table was waiting. Robin, staring dully out of the window, while Anne chafed her mother's hands, saw his father's bald head moving among the crowd, saw the little group of people who were pressing around him, asking questions of him and of the yellow-haired, fragile little woman who clung to his manly arm. At last, comparative silence descended upon the hotel.

Then Robin had to find their carriage, had to hunt up their driver, who had gone off to the hotel kitchen, and had to help Anne bundle his mother in. He could have choked her as she tottered down the hotel steps, still holding her hand to her heart, and moaning softly. As they drove away, they had to pass the door of the marquis. Anne looked in bravely and waved a hand to Henry, who sat next to the youngest Mademoiselle La Rochefoucault. But Robin turned away his head. Perhaps it was just as well that neither of them heard what Mrs. Aspinwall said to her hostess, when Madame le Ministre leaned across an intervening notable to whisper for a moment in Mrs. Aspinwall's ear.

"It is a pity," Madame La Rochefoucault whispered. "She could have carried it off—and we would have helped her. She has a presence—and at least the makings of a Grande Dame."

Mrs. Aspinwall permitted herself a slight sniff.

"The makings, perhaps," she answered. And then added in her stiff, peculiar French, "Mais elle n'a pas de—de guts."

"De quoi?" queried Madame.

"Guts—*entrailles*——"

"She has none? But that is impossible—she——"

Mrs. Aspinwall shrugged her black shoulders.

"I do not know the French word. But whatever it is, she has not got it."

"Ah, je comprends," murmured Madame. "And because she has not got it, she has a heart attack. But that is funny! An attack of the heart! And you say that she has no—*entrailles!*" Then she added, over her shoulder, to the head waiter, "Simon, take away those three vacant places."

Meanwhile, the Randolphs' new buckboard jolted through the streets of Cap à l'Ours, deserted at this hour of the midday meal. It was a ghastly home coming. Still ghastlier was it, when Mrs. Randolph was sitting again in her own living room, entirely recovered, and talking, talking, talking—until Robin felt that his head would soon be riven by the sharp tones of her complaining voice.

"This," said Mrs. Randolph—and if she said it once, she said it ten thousand times—"this is the end of everything! Here I have labored for years to build up a position for my children—and now, thanks to that awful woman who seduced your father, all is lost. I shall never hold up my head again. And tomorrow—tomorrow—is my day at home!"

She wept, and went weeping and wailing to bed.

But it was not, as she had said, the end; only the beginning. For within two days, she had begun to pack; so had the two younger girls.

"People are treating us like lepers," said Mrs. Randolph.

In vain Anne pointed out that no one had come to her mother's "At Home" because they probably thought she was still ill. And no one had called. People didn't make formal calls any longer at Cap à l'Ours. But Mrs. Aspinwall had dropped in; so had Colonel Blake.

Then the younger girls took up their parable. They were both fed up with the place. Their young men friends avoided them; or made foolish jokes about what had happened at Madame La Rochefoucault's luncheon. And for the past two evenings, there had been no boys, no guitars, no songs, on the Randolph veranda. None of the boys would ever come near them again! It was useless for Anne to insist that she herself had met with nothing but understanding kindness at the golf club and everywhere else. And Anne got little help from Robin; for he also felt ashamed and uncomfortable. When one of the older men on the tennis court smiled or laughed, he made himself believe that people were talking about the "Randolph scandal."

"The whole thing need never have happened," Anne had burst out, on the third morning after the fatal luncheon, "if only Mother and you younger girls would have told the truth. You were afraid to let people know that Mother had divorced Father. You imagined that it might do what you call, 'hurt your social position.' And now look what's happened! If you run away now, people will begin to think that Father was in the right; that it was he who divorced Mother, and not the other way round."

Mrs. Randolph cried out, "Anne!"—put her hand to her heart, and began to moan. So Anne took her clubs and went to the links.

When she came back at luncheon time, she found the cottage upset from one end to the other. Trunks had been dragged out from the closet under the stairs, and Léontine was trying her best to cook luncheon and help pack at the same time. Anne hurried up to her mother's room.

"Don't try and talk to me now, Anne," protested Mrs. Randolph. "You do upset me so. I had another angina attack last night. I feel that I must see our physician at home. You can tell people that, if they ask. Or say that I have gone to a hospital in Montreal. I think that I shall go to Southampton for a week or two—to Cousin Francis. They have a charming cottage there—and a good deal of a position. The girls want to go with me—it will be gayer for them there. And they have always missed the sea-bathing here on the St. Lawrence. Now, don't try to argue with me. Robin will travel with us, and manage everything. You can stay here and close the house. And, Anne, I may as well tell you another thing at once. I sent word yesterday to the house-agent, Monsieur MacNicoll, that we should not want this cottage again next summer. If I can't sell it, I'll rent it."

"What!" Anne exclaimed, dazed—almost frightened. "Not come back here next summer! Not come back to Cap à l'Ours!"

"Not for a year or two at least," her mother went on. "I'm tired of the place, anyhow. To tell the truth, I have never really enjoyed it since that summer when—when I was so ill. But you can stay on here if you like until late September. Then I shall want you to open the house in town. Now run along and get your luncheon. Ask Léontine to bring me up something on a tray."

When Mrs. Randolph had once made a decision, right or wrong, she was always in a perfect fever of energy until it was carried out; and no reasoning, no argument could turn her from the once-fixed purpose of a weak, wobbly mind. At Cap à l'Ours she had been humiliated; she had suffered as no gentlewoman should suffer. So she was through with the whole thing. There were other summer places in the world. Perhaps next summer she might even go abroad. She began to plan it all out.

Robin and Anne still sat at the luncheon table, after the two younger girls had gone back to their packing. It was a wonderful afternoon. The air was cool with the promise of autumn; it went to your head like a sparkling Burgundy. The windows of the dining room were open. Anne could look out and down across the village street to the broad sweep of the St. Lawrence.

Suddenly her food seemed to choke her. She put her head on her arms and leaned forward on the table, with shaking, heaving shoulders. Never before in his life had Robin seen his sister Anne cry. He stared at her, helpless.

"I can't go away from here," she muttered, between long, shaking sobs. "I won't. I love this place." Then, lifting a swollen, distorted face, she stared at her brother. "You love it too, don't you? Are you going to leave it just because—because you've got a damn fool for a mother?"

"Oh, hush, Anne!" interposed Robin, shocked and uneasy, too. He wanted to get up and slip away; but he did not quite dare. Anne had always frightened him a little, especially when she got excited. "You mustn't say that."

"I will say it, because it's true. Look at poor Corinne. She hasn't had much of a husband in Eli, I imagine, but she's stuck to him, bad as he is, sometimes. I'll bet she'll make a good man out of him yet. And now she's going blind—unless we do something for her—but she doesn't whine. She doesn't want to pack up and go off somewhere—so that she can get away from unpleasant things. She's got—she's got—guts, she has. So has Eli. So has Léontine. I used to think Amyas had them, too. But people like you and me——" She paused, bit her lips, and got up from the table. "Only I'm not going to be like—like Mother. I'd rather be like Corinne—or like Mrs. Aspinwall—or Henry. He's been here every day since that damnable luncheon. I played golf with him this morning. Do you think he cares about—Father and his fluff of a wife? Not he." She came back to the table and put her arm about Robin's shoulders. "You aren't going to be like Mother—and Father—are you, Robin? Say you won't go off with Mother and the girls, that you'll stay here with me, that you'll come back again next summer to Cap à l'Ours—to the place that you love—as I love it. Mother never loved it; neither did Father, or the girls. To them it was just 'a summer place.' But it's not that to us. To you and me it means—Corinne—and Léontine—and Monsieur le Curé who's dead. It means even Eli, with all his badness. It means beauty—and peace—and—the things I mentioned that—that Mother hasn't got. Why, you keep that funny little doll, that Orphan that Sister Onésime dressed—you keep it with you all the time; take it to examinations; call it your mascot—because it brings you luck. It doesn't bring you luck. But it reminds you of this place—of the people here—of what they stand for, even though they themselves don't realize it. If you leave me, Robin, and go with Mother, you'd better leave that mascot of yours behind. If it ever did bring you luck, it won't any longer. You can't have it and go back on this place too."

She stormed out of the room. And Robin, in a daze of indecision, went up to his own quarters. If he were going to leave on next day's boat, with Mother and the girls, he had better begin to pack. He wouldn't take much. Anne could bring down his other things later.

He began to collect the letters and books that were strewed over his desk. As he swept them together, his hand struck the foot of his Orphan, the little doll in blue with its red trimmings, tipped it over on to the floor. He dived after it in sudden terror. Suppose it had broken! The head was made of some cheap china. He had always packed it very carefully. A broken or a mended mascot loses most of its power.

Now he stood with the little doll in his hands, staring down at it. His mind went back over all the memories that had somehow gathered about this strange object. He remembered the Bazaar at which he had won it; he who never won anything at a raffle or at cards. And then the time when Monsieur le Curé had blessed it—in that bare little room in Corinne's house, while Corinne lay half dead in the corner, giving her breast to her new-born child.

"Monsieur Robin."

Startled, he faced about.

"I do not see very much; but I could help you fold your clothes."

Corinne was feeling her way into the room. He had forgotten all about her during these past few days. Anne had told him that she insisted on sitting in the kitchen, doing what she could to help Léontine. Here she was now—as she had always been—so quiet, so patient, always anxious to help. To help him pack. Pack to go away. And perhaps never to come back again. She must know that. Yet he had promised only a few days since to take her to Quebec, to find someone there to help her failing vision. But now she made no reproaches. She did not remind him of his promise. She had simply come, feeling her way, to do what she could to help him—to help him go away where he could no longer help her.

The dramatic, the sentimental, always gripped Robin, who was cold and irresponsive to logic or argument. Corinne, standing there, almost blind; he getting ready to leave her; he, facing her with the little Orphan in his hand. He was not conscious of making any decision. Indeed, there seemed no decision to make. It had been made already by some power outside himself.

"I'm not going away, Corinne," he said, softly, coming close to her and taking both her hands in his. "I'm staying here with Miss Anne until the end of the season. I couldn't go away without first taking you to Quebec. And I shall hope that you'll be able to see me as clearly as you ever did when I come back again next summer."

He dropped her hands, and went stumbling downstairs.

"Anne," he called, "Anne, where are you?"

Anne was standing on the veranda, all alone, looking down at the spire of the new church that was rising among the trees of the village street.

Robin stared at her.

"Here I am," she said, listlessly. "I was just thinking of the fire—and—the place where it stopped."

"I remember," he said. Then he held out the little doll in his hand.

"So you're leaving it," his sister said. "All right, I'll keep it for you."

"No." Robin drew back his hand, and thrust the Orphan into the pocket of his homespun jacket. "I am staying with it—and with you."

"Good boy!" So she had always said when they were children together and he had done something to please her. "We'll see the summer out together. As for next year—for *l'année prochaine*—you and I can take rooms somewhere in the village. But don't tell anyone yet about our plans. I've an idea that there may be changes before next summer."

"You mean——?"

"I mean—Henry."

"Good girl!" said Robin.

PART IV

CHAPTER ONE

Surrender

To Amyas, sitting on Pednaud's old *planche* behind the worst of his four horses, and waiting for a chance fare from the hotel, many echoes of the "affair of Madame La Rochefoucault's luncheon" had come. Indeed, on two separate occasions he drove Colonel Randolph and his new wife up the River Road and back again to Cap à l'Ours by Bonne Rivière. The Colonel did not know who he was; and Amyas could understand more than a little English. Something within him, long since dead, seemed to wake into sudden life again when he heard the fluffy little woman in the seat behind saying to the bald old man with waxed mustache:

"I hear I've driven her out of town. Damn good job, too. Just the same, I never want to go to a luncheon like that again. I thought I'd never thaw out. People just seemed to freeze me. But it hasn't hurt business any. It's helped it, rather."

"My wife was always a bad bluffer. Call her bluff, and she goes to pieces. But I knew she'd never carry off Anne too. You can't bluff Anne."

"I wish they'd all leave at once. It would make my position much easier. Is it true, do you suppose, that your daughter is engaged to that stick of a young Aspinwall?"

"Maybe. He's been wanting to marry her long enough."

"Well, I know that Mrs. Randolph is renting or selling her cottage. Your daughter Anne is closing it up; giving away furniture and china and getting rid of all their stuff. I don't suppose it would do for me to offer to buy any of it. We might use it if we take that cottage near the hotel next summer."

"For God's sake, keep away from her, Hetty."

"All right. Good riddance to the whole lot. Oh, do look at that green habitant blanket in that shop window. I wonder what they want for it. Stop here a minute, driver. I want to get out."

Amyas pulled up obediently in front of a shop in Bonne Rivière. While he and Colonel Randolph waited in the *planche,* Amyas summoned up all his courage, and turned to the man on the seat behind him.

"I worked once for Mademoiselle Randolph," he said, in very distinct French. "She, Mademoiselle Anne, goes away, and comes not again?"

Colonel Randolph was amused. It pleased him to be able to understand this young man's French. As a rule, "these habitants" spoke so fast that no intelligent person could follow them.

"No, she comes not again," he said, translating literally Amyas' French into English.

"Then there will be no next year—no *l'année prochaine!*"

"I don't know what you mean by *'l'année prochaine.'* But I don't think there will be any more of them for Anne up here."

Amyas drove his fare back to the hotel with such careless, loose reins that the old horse stumbled on the steep Saint Antoine hill and almost dumped Colonel Randolph and his wife into the ditch. They told Amyas that he would never drive them again. But Amyas did not care. He never wanted to drive anyone again—anywhere.

Somehow, at the back of his mind he had always hoped that by and by his troubles would come to an end. That Mademoiselle Anne, his Mademoiselle, would speak to him, would ask him why she never saw him any more, ask him to explain the stories that others told about him. Then he would tell her everything, and things would be as they once had been, in the days when he had first caddied for her, when the links were new. He had always comforted himself with the thought of "next year," of *"l'année prochaine."* And now, there was to be no next year, no *l'année prochaine.*

When Léontine came home to Eli's cottage that night with Corinne, she found her brother in a corner of the porch holding Mille Vaches in his arms and sobbing so that he could not speak or answer her at all. She tried in vain to comfort him. She told him what she thought was good news. Let him imagine it! Mademoiselle Anne was going to take her, Léontine, as her maid—to the United States. She would have to make all the beds in the great town house, and wait on the table. And her wages—Amyas would never guess how much they were to be! Then the journey—think of that—all that way in the railway train——

To her surprise, Amyas jumped up, tore himself away from her, and dashed out into the darkness, followed by Mille Vaches, who went whimpering at his heels.

"Where has he gone?" demanded Corinne. But Léontine could not tell. In her own excitement, she soon forgot about him—there was so much to do. Only a week or two more before Mademoiselle Anne and Monsieur Robin left on the last day-boat.

"You know, Corinne," Léontine pattered on, "the house has been very pleasant these last weeks, with only Mademoiselle and her brother. We have had some parties, too. Monsieur Robin, he gave a luncheon for gentlemen only. Eight people he had. As you know, I cooked it all. He was pleased. And to think that all winter I—I shall see him. I shall make his bed—stand behind him at table—and just brush his shoulder a little—just a little——"

"Be careful, Léontine," warned Corinne. "Down there in the States it may not be the same as here. Monsieur Robin is now an *avocat*. He will no doubt soon seek himself a proper wife, and then——"

"But of course he will," assented Léontine, cheerfully. "That will not keep me from loving him, will it, foolish one?"

Then she caught Corinne about the waist and danced her about the room, while the youngest Martel, a vigorous lad, woke in his bed and howled with delight.

"And you are going on a journey, too," Léontine laughed as, breathless, she let Corinne sink into a chair. "To see the great doctor in Quebec. He will make new eyes for you."

"Ah, Léontine," said Corinne, abruptly, dropping her effort at joyousness. "What good friends Mademoiselle Anne and Monsieur Robin have been to us! Remember then, my child, no harm must ever come to either of them through us. You understand, eh?"

"But of course," Léontine answered, straightening her black hair in front of a small mirror. "I think sometimes though, Corinne, that most of the harm comes to them from themselves."

"Then we—you especially, this winter—must do all you can to keep them from it."

Léontine shrugged her graceful shoulders.

"What can I do? Can I keep Mademoiselle Anne from marrying Monsieur Aspinwall? I do not think she loves him, really. But she wants to get away from home, now that she and Madame are no longer happy together."

"Better to bear with a disagreeable mother," said

Corinne, sententiously; "a mother who must die some day soon, than tie yourself for the rest of your life to a man you do not love; a man who may live longer than you do—although, of course, there are always the children to make up for all that."

"Mademoiselle Anne is of a most unusual peculiarity," nodded Léontine. "She loves children. But —I know, for I have watched her—she does not like the way they are made. And she will like Monsieur Henry all the less when he sets about the making of them. She would like to find a few nice babies in the cabbages of her garden."

While the two women laughed and gossiped together, Amyas, with Mille Vaches at his heels, was plodding along the road to Cap à l'Ours. Within him was a void that ached to be filled with something—anything. So long as he had had his memories of his Mademoiselle, his hopes of some future forgiveness at her hands, he had been able to get along without God and Our Lady and the Saints. Even without Saint Anthony of Padua, his own particular friend among the Hosts of Heaven. But now he was too utterly lonely to fight things out for himself. He must have help. And from childhood, he had been taught to look for a help that was infinitely strong in one direction and in one place. In his extremity, he did not for a moment consider going to the Orphelinat. The Reverend Mother and Sister Onésime were kind, but they were women; they would never understand. And the new Curé at Bonne Rivière, an elderly man with a square gray beard, he knew nothing about Amyas Dufour, except that he did not come to church and had a very evil reputation in the village. Like a bird that has been blown about by a storm and that at last settles down again on its true direction, Amyas made, as fast as he could, for the church at Cap à l'Ours, the new brick church with its little shining tin spire, that stood on the site of the dingy wooden building, where the fire had once been halted by a manifest miracle. That memory hallowed the place to Amyas. It made him feel like a boy again; the boy who had caddied for Mademoiselle Anne; who had brought her the news that the fire was stayed, almost at her threshold, by the very Hand of God.

It was dark, but the stars were all out. A huge yellow moon was rising beyond the southern shore of the great river. The autumn air was cool and clean as it came sweeping down from the ancient pine forests of the Laurentian hills. There were a few people in the village street at Cap à l'Ours; mostly habitants, for many of the *étrangers* had left. It was already too cold for unheated wooden houses. Amyas pulled his cap over his eyes. He passed Monsieur Warren, the mayor, a kindly man, who had known and loved Amyas' father. The Mayor would gladly have spoken to the thin, hurrying figure, but Amyas pretended that he did not see Monsieur Warren. He did not want to talk to *him*—he wanted to talk to Someone infinitely more important than even the Mayor of Cap à l'Ours.

The door of the new church was still open. Amyas breathed a sigh of relief. He had feared that he might find it closed, until he remembered that it was Saturday, and that Monsieur le Curé would be hearing confessions until late in the evening. He tiptoed into the church. It was all unfamiliar. He had never set foot inside it before. And because it did not remind him of anything, because it had no associations with his past life and his present self-imposed exile from God, he felt strangely at ease. He slipped quietly up the aisle and looked around in the dim light. Yes, there was the thing he had been looking for. He had felt almost sure that there must be one in this new church.

Before a new and brightly colored statue of Saint Anthony, the patron of orphans, Amyas Dufour, the orphan, stood and gazed up into the saint's face. The flickering light of the sanctuary lamp cast mysterious moving shadows. It almost seemed to Amyas as though the painted lips relaxed in a smile; as though they were saying, "Well, here you are again —at last."

Did someone really say those words? Amyas was almost sure that he had actually heard them. His knees began to tremble.

Then, from behind, a hand was laid on his shoulder. Amyas faced about. He would not have been surprised to find there Saint Anthony himself in a blaze of heavenly glory. It was somewhat of a disappointment to find only Monsieur le Curé Bienvenu.

But as Amyas stared into the priest's face, it looked so friendly, so understanding, so strong with the kind of strength that he himself so greatly needed—that the young man dropped on his knees, and hiding his face in the folds of the Curé's cassock, began to sob. Only, now the sobs did not tear his chest; the tears did not scorch his eyes. To cry was a relief—a relaxation—almost a happiness.

The priest, being wise, let Amyas cry until the sobs changed to sniffs—until even the sniffs gradually subsided. He waited in silence. At last Amyas spoke, lifting a tear-stained, twisted face to the patient understanding eyes that looked down into his own.

"Monsieur le Curé, I—I have taken what did not belong to me. I—have come to make—to make restitution."

He reached inside his worn blue-flannel shirt, drew forth something, and thrust it into the priest's hands. And then he nerved himself for the coming ordeal, knowing that he must explain, and yet not knowing how; cowering a little as he waited the priest's questions. But only a single question came.

"Is this—this all?"

Amyas nodded.

"Ah," murmured Monsieur Bienvenu, half to himself, "I thought it must be something like this."

Then, in a severe voice, that shook a little—so severe that Amyas put up his hand as if to ward off a blow, he added, "Oh, you stiff-necked young idealist!"

"Mais oui, Monsieur le Curé," stammered the uncomprehending Amyas, "I have been very wicked. But I am sorry now."

"Hum-m-m," said the Curé. "Very well. I will not ask why it happens that you have become sorry just at this particular moment—God works in ways of His own. Here." He held out to Amyas the object that the boy had just given him. "Take it back. You have returned it, if not to the owner, at least to Holy Church. And although Holy Church does not approve of—charms and luck-pieces—still, she does approve of ideals. You will not understand me, my son. But that makes no difference——"

"Then," stammered Amyas, "I may keep it?"

"On one condition. In times past, this—this stolen object—became more precious to you than your immortal soul—because it represented something that seemed to you of infinite worth. You let it cut you off from your church and your God. In future, let it bring you nearer to both. Now I am going into the confessional over there. Kneel down here. Make your examination of conscience. I will wait for you. When you are ready, come and make your confession."

As Monsieur Bienvenu slipped a violet stole about his neck and settled himself in his side of the confessional, he kept making little ejaculatory prayers, interspersed with occasional remarks of his own, a habit of his since seminary days.

"Holy Mary, Mother of God, thanks for this return of a strayed soul. But Hervey—God rest his soul—was right about the boy—he knew that he had a good heart—he suspected some quixotic reason—of which the boy was ashamed—yet could not resist. *Lord Jesus, make my heart like unto Thy Heart.* Somehow I felt sure that the boy would find his way back—I have never ceased praying for him. *Occulos meos levavi ad montes unde veniet auxilium meum.* But the boy had better not stay here—not this winter—people will still misjudge him—I can send him across the river to Rivière de Loup—to my friend, Pascal—he will find him work—and the stories about him here will soon be forgotten. *Deus, Deus meus ad te de luce vigilo.* And I must write to Mademoiselle Randolph—it is only just that she should know about the boy.—That must have been her glove—something of hers—or her brother's—just as Hervey thought. *Requiem æternam dona ei Domine.* Ah, here comes the boy at last—for penance I will have him say only one rosary—the joyful Mysteries—yes, the joyful ones. *Dominus sit in corde tuo et in labiis tuis ut rite confitearis omnia peccata tua, in Nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti, Amen."*

And from the other side of the confessional, Amyas' quavering voice reached the priest's ear.

"I confess to God Almighty, to Blessed Mary ever

Virgin, to Saint Michael the Archangel, to Blessed John Baptist, to the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, before the whole Company of Heaven, and to you, my father, that I have sinned greatly in thought, word, and deed. By my fault, by my fault, by my own most grievous fault."

Amyas smote himself violently three times on the chest. He was beginning to feel better already.

CHAPTER TWO

Rivière de Loup

Of all the dreary places in the world, thought Amyas, the dreariest is certainly Rivière de Loup.

As a matter of fact, it was and is a very pleasant place. But in many ways it is the antithesis of Cap à l'Ours and Bonne Rivière; for it lies on the south bank of the St. Lawrence, which the inflowing Arctic Current does not touch, so that it is sweltering hot, unlike the north bank which is refreshingly cool. Moreover, there are no hills behind it; no breezes blow down from ancient forests of pine and fir. And, it is in direct and devastating touch with that which we so often miscall civilization, for the railroad runs through it, and brings all the bad—and good—things that railroads usually do bring.

To Amyas, Rivière de Loup was intolerable; all the more so because on clear days he could look across the water and catch just a glint of the sun on the tin steeple of the new brick church at Cap à l'Ours. Bonne Rivière, that lies just behind an inlet, he could not see at all.

But he had found work, thanks to Monsieur Pascal Gauthier, the Curé of Rivière de Loup; work in the new pulp mill that had been built by American capital with the laudable intention of turning all the glorious forests of Canada into pulp for the Sunday editions of American newspapers. The mill ruined the salmon fishing in the big streams; no fish would run where the bottoms were covered with chips of wood; but it gave work to a lot of people who could not make a living from their farms, and so it was popular. Amyas worked there because he had to work or else starve. Léontine was in some American city with a strange name, working for the Randolphs. Corinne was in a Quebec hospital. One of them was too busy to write; the other could not see to write—yet. So Amyas would have been cut off from all his old associations completely, had it not been for an occasional note from Monsieur Bienvenu.

The worst of it was that it would have been so easy to get home. For now that Cap à l'Ours was becoming popular as a summer resort, the ancient side-wheelers were no longer able to carry all the traffic, and the railroad company had started a ferry —a small tug—that ran from Rivière de Loup to Cap à l'Ours wharf, so that people could come by rail from Montreal or Quebec to Rivière de Loup and then be put across the St. Lawrence to their destination. Almost every evening Amyas used to wander down to see the tug boat start with its load of passengers for Cap à l'Ours. It made him feel a little less lonely to watch the ferry. And during the late autumn months, until the ferry stopped altogether in December, he never missed its departure for the farther shore.

He knew nobody in Rivière de Loup. The rough, drinking men at the mill annoyed him; the younger people of his own age were always talking about Quebec, the music halls there, the bars, the women of the streets. At Cap à l'Ours, where there was no railroad to connect the place with civilization, no one knew about such things, much less discussed them openly.

And as he was very lonely and very unhappy, with not even his dog to comfort him, he fell back for help on his religion, dragging himself early out of bed nearly every day, going without breakfast in order to get to an early low mass before going to work at the mill. Naturally, his comrades heard of his "especial piety" and teased him about it. At the mill there were also some Americans—the bosses of the different shops and divisions—to whom all the other men looked up admiringly. These Americans, as Amyas noted, never went to church. And they were always drunk on Saturday nights. Two of them had brought women from Quebec. They were blustering, boastful—making fun of all things Canadian as "backwoods stuff," and calling everybody except themselves "damned Canucks." One of them—a young man of twenty-five, who was really a very decent sort—tried to make friends with Amyas. He wanted, so he said, to learn how to talk "Canuck" so that the village girls would understand him better. Amyas, anxious for any kind of friend, met these advances halfway. But at the first lesson in "Canuck," the young American asked Amyas the French equivalent of so many foul words—many of which were unknown to him anyway—demanded the translation of so many vile stories which he "wanted to spring on some of the girls," that Amyas lost his temper—and so lost his only friend.

Still the boy stuck it out. He had promised Monsieur Bienvenu that he would stay away for a year. A year! And it was only December now!

Then came Christmas. If it had not been for the church services, Amyas would have spent the day in his dreary little room near the wharf, gazing out across the river toward the northern shore. No one sent him any letters; any gifts. The ferry was not running now. Letters from Cap à l'Ours had to go all the way to Quebec by sleigh, and then down the other shore by the railway. On Christmas afternoon Amyas could bear it no longer. He went down to the wharf, and sat on a post, gazing out across the water. A perfect load of blackness and discouragement seemed to overwhelm him. Up from a side street that led along the shore to the lowest, most questionable houses in Rivière de Loup, came Johnny Black, the young American who had wanted to "learn Canuck." He was already half drunk; but he was "kindly drunk." His sentimentality, released by the alcohol, could not bear the lonely picture of

Amyas' bent figure. He went up to Amyas; slapped him on the shoulder.

Amyas would have welcomed the devil himself under the circumstances.

So that Christmas evening, Monsieur le Curé of Rivière de Loup missed a familiar figure from the congregation at Benediction; for Amyas was at that time walking arm in arm with Johnny Black, going from one saloon to another, and swearing eternal friendship at every second drink.

How he got home, he never knew. Had he ever seen Johnny again, he might have learned how the American had put him to bed, and had then wept sentimental tears over him because he was such a poor, skinny Canuck boy with no hair on his chest. But when Amyas had dragged himself to the mill next day, he was told by a youth of his own age that Monsieur le Curé had asked last evening after Benediction where Amyas was, because he had a letter for him.

To the surprise of his companions, Amyas walked straight out of the mill. He never went inside it again. For at the Presbytère, he found a fat envelope waiting for him addressed in the careful, clear hand of Monsieur Bienvenu, and inclosing a letter—a letter with American stamps. At first Amyas thought it must be from Léontine. But she could not write as well as this. He turned the letter over. Out dropped a small, folded slip of paper and a five-dollar American bill. And the letter was signed, "Monsieur Robin."

It was written in grammatical, flowing French. And Amyas read it so often during the next few days that even as an old man he could have repeated it almost word for word.

THE UNIVERSITY CLUB
NEW YORK CITY
December 15, 19—

DEAR AMYAS,

Monsieur Bienvenu wrote to my sister about you. We are all so distressed to hear about your troubles. We are sorry that we misjudged you. I am sending this letter in Monsieur le Curé's care, knowing that he will forward it to you in Bonne Rivière. Do not be surprised at my excellent French. My friend, who comes from Montreal originally, and who is one of the partners in my new law firm, is dictating it.

I am inclosing in this letter a check for twenty-five dollars. Also a five-dollar bill, as you may need ready money before you can get the check cashed.

Now listen to what I want you to do. I have not been feeling very well this autumn. And I want to get away from here for a change. I don't think I can stand the Christmas holidays at home. Mademoiselle is so taken up with her trousseau, and her fiancé, that she has no time for me. I am homesick for Cap à l'Ours. That's the truth of it.

Your sister Léontine seems very happy. I do not see her much. Because I do not stay at home any more than I can help. Tonight I have been in New York, with my new partner, dining at his club. He knows the Quebec Province well. His talk made me more homesick still. So I've decided to do something that I've wanted to do always; to see Cap à l'Ours in winter, and to go into the woods for moose and caribou.

I suppose that I ought to write to Eli Martel. But I want to do something for you. Anne says that I ought. So as soon as this letter reaches you, telegraph me when you can meet me in Quebec. Better get a good sled and horse at Bonne Rivière and drive to Quebec to meet me. We'll buy provisions and things for the hunting expedition when you meet me in Quebec. Before you leave Cap à l'Ours, better engage two or three men as guides. We might go in by Saint Urbain to the camp at La Galette. I am sure that Colonel Blake would not mind our using his old guides' hut there. But I'll leave all the details to you.

If you can't go, let me know. I am writing on the 15th. If I don't hear from you within ten days, I shall understand that you can't go; or that my letter has not reached you. I hope, though, that you do get it. I'm crazy to see Cap à l'Ours in winter. Telegraph your answer to my home address.

Your old friend,
Monsieur Robin

It was a good half mile from the Presbytère to the railway station, but Amyas ran all the way, much to the astonishment of his friend, the Curé of Rivière de Loup, who stared open-mouthed after him, from his study window. And the operator at the railway telegraph office was not particularly in a hurry about sending off the message that a panting, excited boy wrote and rewrote, in jumbled French, then in worse English. But somehow the telegram was sent and paid for. And Amyas went back to his room in a fever of anxiety. Would Monsieur Robin wait until the 26th? Or had the letter reached Amyas too late after all? Had he written out the right address—the address at which he had already written to Léontine? All day long he wandered between his room and the railway station.

Just after dark, as the men were streaming out of the pulp mill, the answer came. The telegraph operator, touched by Amyas' evident anxiety, was standing in the doorway of the little station as he approached, waving a yellow envelope in his hands.

CHAPTER THREE

La Chasse de Monsieur Robin

"THERE, Monsieur Robin," said Amyas, pointing ahead, "just round that bend is where the big hill begins that runs down into Cap à l'Ours. You remember that house over there? That's where the old drinking shop was that Monsieur le Curé shut up—once. It goes on still—a little. In twenty minutes more we shall be looking down on the roof of your cottage."

Robin pulled down over his ears the heavy fur cap that he had bought in Quebec. He felt excited, expectant; like a child waiting for the sight of a lighted Christmas tree. Moreover, he was delighted with Amyas. He had never known that a mere habitant could be such a jolly companion. He had ceased to think of Amyas as an overgrown boy. And it had been a delight to fit out this new-old friend of his with new, warm clothes—heavy shirts, lined, leather, soleless boots, and a padded short jacket. For when Amyas met Robin in Quebec, he had almost nothing to wear; surely nothing warm enough for a hunting expedition in this bitter cold. Robin could do no less than make some return, since Amyas had managed everything so easily and so cleverly, picking out a good sleigh, a sound horse, going to the proper authorities to get the shooting license, buying supplies, and checking up everything to the last penny. Why, he was as efficient as any older guide, and a great deal more fun. Robin had insisted on going to a small hotel in Quebec because he wanted to have Amyas with him—to eat with him, to share his room, to make him talk in his slow, careful French, while he himself babbled easily in English.

Now they were almost at the end of their two-day journey. On the first evening they had reached Baie Saint Paul, stiff and cold; but they were soon warm and happy again in the little hotel, where Amyas waited on Robin and fussed about him and made him feel very comfortable and very important indeed. Next morning they had hired another sleigh and another horse and driver. They had made good time. To Robin it was all so fascinating, seeing a country that he thought he knew as well as the back of his hand quite altered in its outlines and living conditions. The snow lay everywhere in great drifts, strewn across the fields, blotting out the fences, and covering the outhouses and barns nearly to the eaves. He began to sing some of the old, familiar Canadian songs. Together they shouted "*Alouette*" and "*Brigadier vous aves raison.*" Robin began "*Que les beaux jours sont courts,*" but Amyas checked him. That was too sad a song. So instead, they sang "*En roulant ma boule.*"

"There's the roof of our cottage," shouted Robin. In another five minutes they had made the sharp turn at the bottom of the steep hill and were driving up the village street of Cap à l'Ours, past the new brick church, past the house of Monsieur Warren, the Mayor, down and on to the tiny "hotel" which Madame Pilote, the postmistress, kept open for occasional commercial travelers during the winter.

In half an hour almost everyone in the village had heard that Monsieur Robin had arrived unexpectedly; that Amyas Dufour, that good-for-nothing, was with him; but that Amyas must have some good in him, since he was making all the arrangements for Monsieur Robin, was even engaging the guides for a week in the woods at La Galette. Eli Martel was going; so was old Joseph Lajoie.

Perhaps nothing in after life gave to Amyas quite the same satisfaction as all this. To be able to discuss with old Joseph the exact amount that he was to receive each day; to beat him down a little; to make old Joseph feel that he, the despised Amyas, held the purse strings, and that he did not intend to let anyone rob his Monsieur Robin; to make out lists of supplies with Eli, and especially to check over every single thing that Eli put into the big packs. All this was incense to his nostrils. But most imposing of all was his visit to the Seigneur, in whose Seigneurie limits they were to hunt. Eli went with him. And so, Amyas entered the big, white house of undressed stone for the first time. The interior, with its faded red curtains, its old maps and prints hiding the wall, its book-lined library, and above all the dining room, with the great, long table of polished oak and the shimmering glass decanters on the sideboard—all this checked his excitement and made him feel very small and insignificant indeed. But if the house itself impressed him with a sense of awe, its owner roused in Amyas no feelings of envy. On the contrary, he found himself feeling strangely sorry for the harassed, unhappy man who had not taken the trouble to shave for a week and whose linen was as old and as dirty as the stubble on his chin. The Seigneur was sitting in his study, before a disordered desk, reading a thumbed back number of some English illustrated paper.

When he saw Eli, he seemed to shrink still more into himself. He began to complain in a dull, flat voice. He was not well; why must he be constantly disturbed about unimportant matters? Listlessly, he glanced at the hunting permits that Amyas had secured in Quebec, and then with a nod of dismissal went back to his tattered illustrated paper.

As they let themselves out of the back door, through a kitchen that was disordered and cluttered with unwashed plates and the remains of hastily prepared meals, Amyas said to Eli, "He is not a 'grand Seigneur.' Why, I would make a better Seigneur myself."

Now that he was out in the winter air again, his newly found self-confidence returned with a rush.

"Hush," said Eli, who had a deep respect for established rank and caste; "you blaspheme."

On their way back to the "Pilote House," as the postmistress called her tiny hotel, Robin met them. He had been coasting down the Quebec hill with a group of village boys. He overflowed with happiness.

"I've been having a great time, Amyas," he called out, as he gave the sled he had been using to one of the boys who were gathered about him, gazing at him with adoring eyes. "I'll come again this afternoon," he said, waving them away. "You know, I feel as if everything were upside down," he said to Amyas and Eli, as they walked down the street together. "In the summer we *étrangers* are the—well, the more important people. You habitants work for us—or we hire your horses—and we don't ever know much about you. Most summer people never set foot in your houses. But now—why, I am your guest. At least that's the way you make me feel. I'm not doing anything for you; you are doing things for me. Pascal Rochette—who has worked in our garden for years—he has asked me to a supper and a *veillée* at his house tonight. The Riverons want me tomorrow. Why, if I could stay a week I'd be going out to dance and dine every night. It's strange, isn't it?"

"No, Monsieur Robin," Eli answered, with a dignity, a sort of man-to-man air that made him seem to Robin a person entirely different from the Eli

Martel whose mare he had used to hire. "Not strange. If you were really an *étranger,* do you think that we would ask you to our houses? People like you and like Mademoiselle Anne are welcome among us always. Is that not so, Amyas?"

As Amyas nodded assent, a little boy, in a red toque pulled down over his ears, and in a padded homespun jacket buttoned up to the chin, dashed up to them. At the moment they were passing the new brick Presbytère that had been built close to the new brick church of Cap à l'Ours.

"Monsieur le Curé asks you to come in for a moment," he panted.

Amyas was a little puzzled. His first visit had been to the Curé, although they had not had an opportunity to talk much with one another. What could the priest want now?

Monsieur Bienvenu was standing on the steps of his little veranda, his black cassock making a dark splotch against the masses of the surrounding snow. He saluted Robin in his perfect French, and apologized for stopping him.

"It is only because I have something belonging to Amyas," he went on, "that he ought perhaps to take with him on this hunting expedition of yours. I could not lay my hands on it until today. For in order to keep it safe, I had sent it to a farm up the river. It has just been returned to me."

Amyas, twisting his cap in his hands, stared open-mouthed at the priest.

"In there," said Monsieur Bienvenu, pointing to the closed door of his study. "Go in and get it yourself."

Still puzzled, Amyas opened the study door, went in, and closed it behind him. Robin heard a yelp, a whimper, and then a joyful, crashing bark.

"It was a test," the priest whispered to Robin. "If he was willing to leave the dog behind, to go out into the world absolutely alone, then I should know that he was in earnest. Besides, I wanted him to be so much alone that he could—find his way back to God."

The study door opened, and Amyas dashed out, with Mille Vaches, a rather sleek, well-fed Mille Vaches, barking at his heels. But Mille Vaches was a good Catholic. Leaving Amyas for a moment, he trotted up to the Curé, and pawed gently at his cassock.

"Oh," panted Amyas, "and I never expected to see him again, ever."

The Curé bent down to pat the dog's head.

"I have read somewhere," he said, glancing up at Robin, "that a man must lose his life in order to find it. Doubtless the same principle applies to dogs."

So Mille Vaches went up into the woods, to La Galette; went with Robin in a sleigh driven by Amyas, while Eli and Lajoie and the packs were crowded into another sleigh. A two-day drive it was; and the weather held clear and cold; so cold and so dry that one did not feel the cold and had to keep asking whether one's ears were freezing or not. One night was spent at Saint-Urbain, in the house of a cousin of Eli's; for the Martels are a widely scattered clan. Then, by the next noon they reached the farm of Marcel Goderault, on the very edge of the woods. Here the two sleighs and one of the horses were left. Most of the *butin*—the guns, packs, and provisions—were piled on a flat, wooden, wheelless sledge, that slid along easily over the snow and was drawn by the other horse. The four men were on snow-shoes—not the wide-spread snow-shoes of the American Indian, but the narrow, Canadian shoes, that are much better fitted for long distances, even though they do sink deeper into the brittle snow. Now began a long, gruelling walk, a steady plodding on and on, for hour after hour. Up long, seemingly endless hills; across wide patches of snow where no trees stood; and then down again on a steep slope, where the loaded sledge kept slipping forward on the tired horse's heels. Five long hours of it.

Robin was in no condition for such a walk. But he was determined not to show it. Time and time again he refused Amyas' suggestion to sit on the sledge for a while and let the horse drag him with the rest of the *butin*. No; he was going to stick it out to the end, somehow. But as dusk began to gather, he felt that he could stick it out no longer. What was the sense of tormenting himself like this? He had come out for pleasure, not to walk himself to death. But always he told himself that he could stand it for five minutes more. And after those five minutes—well, another five might be possible before he gave in and dropped on to the sledge.

Unexpectedly, while passing through a clump of firs, they came out on the shore of a little frozen lake.

"There," said Eli; "there, on the other shore, is La Galette. You can see Colonel Blake's fishing lodge through the trees. The old guide hut is just behind it."

Amyas glanced at Robin. Step by step he had been watching him, guarding him, trying to make the way easy, filled with a new sense of responsibility. If anything should happen to him, what should he, Amyas, say to his Mademoiselle—his Mademoiselle who must believe in him once more? If Monsieur Robin had a happy time in the woods, he would tell his sister all that Amyas had done. And then she would know—she would understand—that he had done it, not so much for Monsieur Robin, although he was beginning to think of him in a new and wonderful way, but for her. Even in the falling dusk he caught the gray, pinched look of Robin's lips. He dived into a pocket of his jacket and brought out a small bottle with a red label. Stamping a hole in the ice near the shore of the lake, he filled a little tin cup with water and mixed it with ten or twelve drops from his mysterious bottle.

"Drink it, Monsieur," he said to Robin.

Robin sipped the icy water. Almost immediately a sense of warmth seemed to steal through his cold, tired body. He held out his hand for the little bottle. But Amyas shook his head.

"No more. That is Perry's Perfect Pain Killer. It is good for animals—and for men, too. Better than whisky."

In half an hour more they were unloading their packs at the door of the guide house. Eli felt for the key—hidden on a beam above the lintel—for this was a familiar stamping-ground for him. He had been here with Colonel Blake years and years ago, long before the comfortable fishing lodge had been built. Now this lodge was kept securely locked. But once a hunter, lost and starving, had made his way to the guide's hut, only to find it locked also and to die of cold on the doorstep. Ever since then, the key of this hut was left where any sensible man might find it if he looked long enough.

It was pitch dark inside, for the snow was up to the middle sash of the two low windows. Four bunks, a stove, wood, a few shelves, and in the bunks, heaps of *sapin,* or fir branches, that made an excellent mattress of sorts.

Robin almost literally fell into one of the bunks. Amyas dragged a blanket from the packs and covered him up. He lay there in a doze, watching the light of the fire in the little iron stove, as Eli and Lajoie unpacked and began to cook supper. Amyas brought him a piece of hot, smoky toast and a little whisky in some warmish water. But the Pain Killer had been more powerful. He dozed; and woke with a start, to find supper ready on the rickety table. My, how hungry he was! And how he would sleep that night!

Mille Vaches, who all during the long tramp had followed silently in Amyas' footsteps, came and lay down at Robin's feet. He fed the dog with bits from his own plate. Why had he never had a dog of his own? Probably because it was too much trouble. And yet what a lot he had missed! When he got back home——

His head fell forward, and the tea splashed up from his tin cup. He could hardly keep his eyes open.

The last thing he remembered was Amyas bending over him, tucking in the blankets, moving the candle so that it would not shine in his eyes. How jolly it would be to have someone to look after you like this! Some day, when he had become a famous lawyer, he would have a man, a valet of his own. Someone like Amyas—not a man who had lived all his life in stuffy cities, among hurrying, fussy people. But a man who was—well, who was a man—and who understood him.

"Dormez bien, Monsieur Robin," whispered Amyas.

Robin put out his hand and touched Amyas on the shoulder.

"Merci," he said; "merci, mon ami."

CHAPTER FOUR

The Hunt

Robin slept until late next day. There was no hurry, anyway. It was still clear. Eli said that this weather would hold for a week. And they did not intend to begin hunting until the next morning. Their hunting permits allowed them four caribou—two for Robin and two for Amyas—or two moose. But there was scarcely a chance for moose. They had been very scarce of late years. The caribou, however, were said to be feeding about in big herds.

After breakfast Robin cleaned and oiled his rifle. After lunch he went for a long tramp with Eli, who showed him lots of caribou tracks; and one track that looked like a bear.

"Him I do not desire to meet," said Eli, and he led Robin in the opposite direction.

After dinner that night, they played cards, all four of them. And before they went to bed, Robin brought out the first of his two bottles of Scotch, filled the tin cups, and they all drank, bowing ceremoniously to one another across the rickety table, still littered with cards.

"Salut, Monsieur Robin! A la bonne chance demain!"

Next morning they breakfasted before sunrise. As they came out from the hut and were fastening their snow-shoes, the fog was just beginning to lift from the clumps of fir trees and the hollows that the wind had swept clear of snow. Even Mille Vaches seemed repressed, and crept along closely, without a whimper, just behind Amyas' snow-shoes.

They struck off to the northeast, where the *jardins* lay, so Lajoie said, in which the caribou fed in the early morning. Robin had no idea where he was going; he simply followed along. First went Lajoie, then Eli; next Robin, and then Amyas carrying Robin's rifle; while Mille Vaches brought up the rear. An hour or so later, they saw Lajoie raise his hand. The line stopped. Following the motion of his hand, they moved back a little, turned off to the right, and came upon a little hill almost bare of trees. Lajoie motioned again—they kicked off their snow-shoes, and got down on their knees. Amyas had his hand on Mille Vaches' collar. He was telling himself that he ought to have taken Eli's advice and left the dog in the hut; but Robin had insisted on taking him, and Amyas had not the heart to tie him up alone in the dark cabin.

Robin was plumping awkwardly through the deep snow on his hands and knees. Now and then one hand would slip, and his head would drop down into a snowdrift. He would come up, blowing and choking. Lajoie stopped. He motioned Eli aside. Robin crept up to where the old hunter was lying, and Amyas thrust forward the rifle into Robin's hands.

Following Lajoie's pointing finger, Robin looked down on a flat expanse of snow through which low bushes and shrubs reached up to the dawning sunlight. Moving against this dazzling white, he saw a herd of some fifteen caribou, not seventy yards away. The brownish bodies, shimmering with the dew on their flanks, were moving up and down, feeding on the bushes and shrubs. Robin was so excited that he could not distinguish one caribou from another. His hands were shaking. He could scarcely throw open the breech of his Winchester and snap a cartridge into the barrel.

"Look along my arm, Monsieur," whispered the voice of old Lajoie at his side. "There are too many does—but where I point is a big buck. See his horns? Only, make haste—the wind——" He wet his finger and held it up for a second. "The wind is changing a little. The whole herd will get our scent in a moment. The big buck! Make haste!"

Robin looked along his wavering sights. Why couldn't he hold the rifle steady? The big buck, Lajoie had said. He couldn't see any big buck. It was all a mass of moving brown bodies.

Then, suddenly, two of the caribou, on the farthest right of the herd, threw up their heads and faced about, looking up at the hill above them.

"Hurry Monsieur! They are winding us. Ah, *sacré nom de——"*

Robin fired. He jerked out the empty shell and fired again. Three times the rifle cracked. And in his excitement, he would have gone on shooting down into the already deserted *jardin* if Lajoie had not quietly taken the rifle out of his hands.

"Why waste powder, Monsieur?" he said, dryly. "There are no caribou there now. Better let me take your rifle. And stay here until we come back."

Robin got to his feet and leaned, panting, against a tree. This "hunting" was more difficult than he had thought. Yet he had shot partridges and rabbits—lots of things—without any such excitement as this. His eyes followed Lajoie and Eli, who had dashed down the hill and were kneeling about a brown body that kicked and struggled in the snow, down below.

"Did I get one?" stammered Robin to Amyas. "What are they doing down there? I'm going to see."

"You hit two," Amyas said. "One is only wounded. Eli is cutting its throat. Both are does, I think. Shall we go down? Here, I will put on your snow-shoes."

Robin sat down again in the snow.

"I think—" he said rather faintly—"I think I will wait here a little." He drew Mille Vaches toward him and fondled the dog. Mille Vaches licked his face. "I'm afraid, Amyas," he added, in a burst of confidence, "that I'm not much of a shot."

"You shot two," persisted Amyas. "Even if they are does and have no horns, they are good to eat. And the skins you can make into rugs. Perhaps Mademoiselle Anne would—would like to have one."

The snow down below in the *jardin* was trampled now, and covered with big blotches of red. Lajoie and Eli had taken off their coats and were working hard. The steam of their sweating bodies hovered about them like an unpleasant mist. At last they came back to where Robin and Amyas were walking up and down, trying to keep warm. Both were covered with blood. And each one carried a head, that dripped red gobbets on the snow behind them.

"Too bad that you missed the big buck," said Eli, throwing the head he carried down on the snow. "These two aren't much good. Not worth the cost of being mounted. We'll come out here with a small sled this afternoon and bring in the best of the meat. The skins, too. We can leave everything here for the present."

All four tramped back to camp. After eating, Eli and Lajoie set off again, with a small sled that they had found in the guide house. So Robin and Amyas and the dog were left alone. Robin was dead tired; the excitement of the morning had so exhausted him that he dozed. But at four o'clock he awoke and began to pace up and down the hut, bored and not knowing what to do.

"I wish I had something to amuse myself with," he said to Amyas. "I don't want to go out again—and two of us can't play cards. I wish I'd brought a book to read. I don't suppose you've got any kind of book with you, have you, Amyas?"

Amyas hesitated. He did have a book—the one book that went with him everywhere. But what good would an old Prayer-book be to this new friend and master of his! Still, Monsieur Robin had asked for a book. Amyas felt that he must produce printed matter of some kind.

He fumbled among his belongings, and with a rather shame-faced expression held out something to Robin. He had heard that people sometimes liked books because they were old.

"I got only this," he said, deprecatingly. "It is only a book of prayers. But it belonged to the Mother of my father. And it is very old."

"To your grandmother?" asked Robin, taking the book, without much interest, and instinctively caressing it with his long, sensitive fingers; for Robin loved books—any book.

"Why, yes, I suppose so." Somehow Amyas had never thought of his father's mother as his own grandmother. He had so few memories even of his father. A grandmother was too hazy a personage for his objective mind.

Robin was fluttering the leaves, glancing at the fine, blurred type. "Prières du Matin. Manière d'assister à la Messe."

"You don't seem to have used it much," he said.

"I? Why should I use it? It has only prayers for women. But I carry it with me always. Monsieur le Curé Hervey took it from my father's dead hand. He said that it was my only inheritance."

Robin's sentimental, romantic mind was touched at once. The little book suddenly took on an unusual importance. He turned the pages carefully. On the fly leaf, in faded ink, he read, "Séraphine Pelletier pour sa première Communion." And then a date—sixty—seventy years ago.

"I wonder what she looked like, this Séraphine," he murmured, pronouncing each syllable of the name softly, under his breath. Then he looked up abruptly at Amyas. "See here. There's a little pocket in the back cover. But it's been sewed up with black thread. There's something inside it, I think. May I open it?"

Amyas hesitated. He felt very peculiarly about that little book. It was, so Monsieur le Curé had said, an inheritance. Ought he to tamper with it—to alter it in any way? A year ago he would have reached out and snatched the book out of Robin's hands, and then felt sorry for his rudeness. But now—this young man—the brother of his Mademoiselle—had assumed in Amyas' eyes a new, a dominating interest. Had it not been for him, Amyas might be still working in the pulp mill at Rivière de Loup. And last night just before he went to sleep, he had said "mon ami." No, there was nothing in the world—nothing—that Amyas would not give him, would not do to serve him.

He dived into his pocket, brought out his knife, and opened the smallest blade.

"But certainly, Monsieur Robin," he said. "Open it with this."

Amyas watched the care, the respect, with which Robin cut, one by one, the faded black threads that held the lip of the pocket fastened to the edges of the back cover; watched his long, tapering fingers slip into the pocket and draw out two papers, folded and creased and worn at the edges. Robin held them out to Amyas.

"They belong to you, Amyas."

Amyas waved them aside. He was not temperamentally curious. This "old stuff," as he would have called it, held no vital interest for him.

"May I look at them then?" asked Robin. His hand was trembling a little. The finding of anything old and hidden always appealed to him.

"Mais oui, certainement, Monsieur Robin."

Robin laid the papers on the rickety camp table. He unfolded the first. It was a letter—rather, a note, for there was no address on the back of it, as would have been customary in days when there were no envelopes.

"It is a letter," he said softly. "In French. But not, I think, very good French." He smiled up at

Amyas, who was bending over his shoulder. "More like the French I write, myself." He turned the paper over to the single sheet of writing—the writing, apparently, of someone who wrote either hastily or in great stress, for some sentences were half begun, then stricken out, and started over again. "The name signed at the end is—is not a French name."

Then, slowly, word by word, he began to read to himself. Abruptly, he covered the bottom of the letter with his hand, and turned to Amyas.

"I don't think I ought to read this," he said, allowing his conscience to triumph over his curiosity. "It is—a—very private letter—written to—to Séraphine—your grandmother."

Amyas shrugged his shoulders. The little book of his was proving vastly more interesting than he had expected. Monsieur Robin seemed fascinated by it. And what more could Amyas ask!

"No matter," Amyas said, sitting down on the bench at Robin's side. "She is dead already a long time."

So Robin compromised.

"I will try to read it aloud," he said. "If at any time you want me to stop and to read no farther, just tell me."

Then he began to read aloud, stopping here and there, pretending that he could not make out a word or two, but really so moved by this record of two loving, unhappy people that he did not trust his own voice.

Ma bien aimée, ma petite femme chérie—

I hope that this will reach you—reach you without anyone knowing or suspecting that I have written. You have done so much to protect me; I must protect you all I can. I, who have broken your heart and endangered your soul, when I would have given my own soul ten thousand times over to save you the slightest pain. I am sending this by the hands of young Eli Martel, who has been my guide in the woods many times in the past. I do not trust him entirely—but I must trust someone. I cannot risk harming you by allowing any suspicion to reach your husband. Ma petite femme chérie—mine—mine—I cannot bear to write those words "your husband"—for you are mine—not his. And yet, ma bien aimée, I understand only too well why you have done this thing. You have sought to protect me and my future by doing something that you must know to be a very, very grievous sin. You are damning your own soul, for my sake. And how well you have reasoned it all out. Now that you have openly married a man, who in the sight of God can never be your husband as long as I live, you have indeed placed between us a barrier that even I, with all my love, can never cross. You know that now I cannot claim you as my wedded wife, because by so doing I should proclaim you a sinner, not only against the laws of God, but against the laws of man also. On the day that you were married to Étienne Dufour, in the parish church, during the week that I was in Quebec at my brother's funeral, you put your honor, your life, into my keeping. Have no fear; it will be safe with me. And I understand so well why you have done all this. If my brother had not died so suddenly, my father might have given me a farm on the Seigneurie and let me settle down there with you.—He would have been bitterly angry.—You know what he, like all these stiff-necked English-speaking Presbyterians, thinks about the people of your race who are the real Canadians, the men and women who settled this beloved country of ours, before an English word was ever heard on the banks of the great river.—But with my brother's death, everything changed, and you realized it before I did. Such swift, logical steps you took—to protect me! To protect me, for what? Because of the Seigneurie? I would give it up ten thousand times to undo the words of betrothal that you spoke to Étienne Dufour, you who had spoken the same words to me only a few months ago. But I must stop. Only remember this. You have taken two husbands—in order to protect your lover—me, who will never love another woman as long as I live—but I shall never have more than one wife, ma bien aimée. And if the Good God punishes you for what you have done through your love for me, then I will clamor at the doors of Hell until they open to let me in, so that I may be with you again. Only, I do not think so poorly of the Good God. He is a gentleman. And he will understand.

As Robin's voice ceased, there was dead silence in the cabin, except for the dry whirr of driven snow on the window panes.

"It is very poor French," said Amyas at length. "I could write more grammatically than that myself. Besides, I do not understand what it is all about. Eli and Lajoie ought to be back soon. Or we might play cards. I know a good game for two players. I'll show you."

"One moment," interposed Robin. Amyas had gone to the window.

Robin reached out his hand for the other paper, that had lain for so many years in the fastened little pocket, side by side with the old love letter. Even before he opened it, he felt somehow that he knew exactly what it was. A certificate of marriage; the statement of a Justice of the Peace in an American town, just across the Quebec border. Robin knew the town at once, for every year his southbound train stopped there for the United States Customs officers. Séraphine Pelletier, spinster, and—— It was the same name that had been signed to the old love letter. The name that Robin had covered with his hand, lest Amyas should catch sight of it.

"Amyas," asked Robin, in a rather uncertain voice, "would you mind if I kept these—this paper for a little while? I should like to read it over again. It is very interesting."

"Mais oui, certainement," nodded Amyas. "They are both dead long ago, whoever they were."

Half an hour later, Lajoie and Eli stumbled in, dragging the sled that was piled high with fresh caribou meat, two skins, and two doe heads. They were both tired and cross. The evening proved a dull one.

"Tomorrow," said Robin, with a yawn, "we must be up early again. I can shoot two more caribou or one moose. I want to get a really good head."

When he was in his bunk and Amyas was tucking in his blankets, Robin raised himself on his elbow. He felt excited—and not because he was going to kill a great buck tomorrow, either.

"Amyas, tell me about your father," he asked. "What do you know about him?"

"Not much. Only that he was a very obstinate man. If he believed a thing, he went on believing it, no matter what other people said. So Monsieur le Curé told me. For myself, I do not remember. I was too young. Good-night."

CHAPTER FIVE

The Killing

"For God's sake, Amyas," snarled Eli, as he was putting on his snow-shoes in the dark next morning, "tie up that cur of yours today and leave him in the hut. He'll ruin the hunting."

Amyas flared up.

"He is a good dog," he retorted. "A great deal better dog than some people I know."

Two months ago Amyas would not have dared to speak to Eli in such a tone. But his present position as the friend and adviser of Monsieur Robin had made him a little too self-important. He had always hated Eli, anyhow.

Eli snarled, and bared his yellow tusks of teeth; he began to jabber excitedly in French, until Robin appeared in the door of the hut. Both Amyas and Eli stopped quarreling but they still glared at each other. It was Lajoie who, in a quieter tone, suggested to Robin that the dog had better stay behind; the caribou might wind him, or he might bark and so ruin everything at the last moment. Robin did not realize that in falling in with Lajoie's suggestion, he was taking sides between Amyas and Eli. He did not notice Eli's satisfied, malevolent grin as Amyas took the dog inside the hut again.

"You others had better start," Amyas called, from inside the hut. "I'll tie Mille Vaches up safely here, and catch up with you in a minute."

The three other men started off in the shadowy dawn. Amyas bent down over his dog.

"You shall come, just the same," he whispered. "See—I tie this rope loosely to your collar, and I leave the door of the hut just a little ajar. If you break away and come after us, is it my fault? Then Eli cannot blame me."

He thrust a bit of wood under the hut door, in order to hold it slightly open, patted Mille Vaches' head, and hurried out after the others.

This morning Lajoie took a new direction. But at first—for more than one long hour they saw nothing. It was growing light, and the sun had risen in a cloudless sky. By this time the caribou would have all eaten and gone back into the dense woods. Robin began to tire, to grow discouraged. There would be no big buck for him this morning. Still they plodded on.

"I will try one more place," said Lajoie.

He led them up a steep slope. Halfway up, he stopped, and pointed to his left.

"Bear tracks," he said.

Eli shook his head.

"What would wake him up at this time of the year?" he said. "I saw something like those tracks day before yesterday. But they are not moose tracks or caribou, either."

Robin glanced uneasily at the thick clump of trees and bushes that covered the ground to his left. He did not want to shoot a bear. But he wanted to be ready to protect himself. Automatically, he threw open the breech of his rifle and slipped a cartridge into the barrel. Then he followed on behind Lajoie. Now they were at the top of the hill, looking down, not on a level stretch of snow, like yesterday, but on a rather narrow ravine. The ground rose steeply on the other side of it, but the slope on which they stood was bare and only partially covered with shallow drifts of snow.

As they came to the top, Lajoie kicked off his snow-shoes. Robin obeyed his silent signal, and crept after him on all fours, dragging his rifle along at his side. Once again the tense excitement of yesterday caught him. He pulled off his mittens with his teeth, so that he could shoot without delay.

They were coming to the edge of the trees, when in the thicket on their left, the thicket to which the mysterious tracks had led, down behind them on the other side of the hill, there was a sound, or rustling, a swishing, as though some animal were making its way rapidly through the undergrowth.

Almost before Robin knew what he was doing, he had turned sideways in the snow, toward the left, and had fired into the bushes. In the silence that followed the shot, there was a single yelp of pain. Lajoie threw up his hands in disgust.

"A fox, perhaps, or a wild cat. And meanwhile, the caribou——" He broke off suddenly, seized Robin's rifle, jerked another cartridge into the breech, and thrust the loaded weapon into his hands. "See there," he whispered, his voice vibrating with excitement. "A chance in ten thousand."

Robin followed the pointing hand. On the other side of the little gulley, at the very top of the hill on its further slope, outlined against the snow, stood a single buck. His wide spread of horns was just visible against the blue of the winter sky. He stood there for a moment, poised—tense—looking across the gulley toward the sound that had disturbed him—over a hundred yards away—and visible against the sky line—for just a moment.

Robin jerked his rifle to his shoulder. The clean sharp crack died away on the cold still air. And yet the big buck stood there. Then, slowly, he wheeled, lifted his great head, and sank to his knees.

"By God," cried Lajoie, swearing in English, "you've hit him! A good shot, Monsieur Robin! A damned good shot!"

Robin was trembling so that he could not get on his mittens. He was still holding one in his teeth, when he followed Lajoie and Eli down the hill, across the gulley, and up the other side. They went only a little faster than he did, for he was beside himself with exaltation and excitement. His big buck at last! He would have it mounted in Montreal. He knew just the place in his new rooms where he could hang it. He would——

"Careful, Monsieur Robin," he heard Eli's voice behind him. "Wait till I get out my knife. He may be only wounded."

But Robin did not hear. He pushed ahead of Lajoie.

There the big buck lay, stretched out in the snow. The horns were magnificent. Not too old, either. A young buck caribou in the very acme of its strength.

Robin looked down at the head. Why, the beast wasn't dead yet. Its long muzzle lay softly against the snow, the breath was whistling through the big, soft-blowing nostrils. And a thin stream of blood was dripping from the quivering lips.

Then Robin looked at the eyes; straight into the eyes of a dying animal, shot through the lungs. And from those big, reproachful brown eyes, great tears were dripping—dripping down the soft fur of the muzzle.

"Better let me cut his throat," said a voice behind him.

Robin threw out his arm.

"Keep away," he almost shouted; "keep away. Leave him alone. Haven't I done enough to him already! You leave him alone."

He dropped on one knee, close to the big head. And the soft eyes that had begun to grow filmy already, stared up at him. It seemed to Robin as though he almost heard the eyes speak. Why—why—oh, why did you do this? The sun was so clear—so warm. And there was plenty of food. I fought yesterday night with another buck. I felt my strength. And I was thinking of spring—and the mating time. Life—life was so pleasant! And then—you came. What had I ever done to you? And you do this to me! Why—why—why?

"Oh—oh," panted Robin, trying to free himself from the emotion that was choking him, that seemed to tear at his own lungs. "Oh, hell! I'll never kill another thing—not for fun—It isn't any fun—It isn't any fun at all!" He threw his rifle down on the ground. "And to hell with you, too," he cried.

Eli and Lajoie were staring at this strange exhibition. Eli touched his forehead, and nodded at Lajoie.

"*Troublé,*" he murmured.

"He is not *troublé* at all," broke in Amyas, who had just come up. "He does not like to see things hurt. You two do not understand. Why should you! You have black hearts."

"Eh?" demanded Eli, his knife already in his hand. "I have a black heart, have I?"

But old Lajoie, who had rejoiced for years in the possession of "le cœur noir," and who knew the value of that reputation, pushed Eli's hand aside.

"Take Monsieur Robin back to where we left the snow-shoes," he said to Amyas. "We have work to do here. No matter how Monsieur Robin feels now, he will feel still worse if he does not have this good head to show to his friends. Just the same, it was a good shot. Luck, maybe. But what is luck, after all! And when you get back to the shoes, look round a little in that clump of bushes—the one that Monsieur Robin fired into. He was anxious enough to kill something then. But he may have only wounded it. And even though I may have a black heart myself, young man, I do not sleep so well if I have only wounded an animal and left it to die or to be eaten alive by other beasts."

Lajoie had taken out his big hunting knife and was polishing it on the arm of his leathern jacket. "It is not we men who have black hearts," he said, watching Eli, who was leaning over the head of the dying buck; "it is all this—all this world—" he made a sweeping gesture around him—"this world in which the stronger kills the weaker; in which you must kill or be killed. It is the God who made it all who has the black heart, not I."

"You blaspheme," protested Amyas, covering his ears.

"Maybe. But I am an old sinner. And I am used to it. Now go."

By the time Robin reached the spot where his snow-shoes lay, he was beginning to feel very much ashamed of himself. Why was he always making such a fool of himself? Eli and old Lajoie would be laughing in their sleeves. And what a good story they would make of it all when they got back to Cap à l'Ours! The brave hunter who shot a buck at over a hundred yards, and then cried because he had not missed it!

"Amyas, I am a silly ass," he said. To Eli or to Lajoie he could never have said as much. But somehow Amyas was different, these days.

"No, Monsieur," said Amyas slowly. "You have only a kind heart. But it is not good to let other people know it. Especially," he added, almost venemously, "those people who have black ones of their own."

"Hark—what was that?" Robin held up his hand. It seemed to him that he had caught a faint whimper, a kind of panting, tired sob. "Down there. To the left."

"I will go and see," said Amyas, slipping again out of his snow-shoes. "Lajoie told me to look through those bushes."

"Better take my rifle." Robin thrust the gun into Amyas' hands. "I don't know why I was such a fool as to fire into those bushes. Anyway, it couldn't be a bear. Call out if you need help."

He sat in the snow, leaning up against a tree, and he was trying to light his pipe, when from the bushes on his left he heard a single shot. He jumped up.

"Amyas! Amyas!" he called. But there was no answer. He waited a moment. Then, kicking off his snow-shoes again, he dashed into the thicket.

With an abruptness that threw him back on his heels, he came upon Amyas, sitting on the ground, in a tiny clear space, where the snow was spotted with blood. In his arms lay a dead dog. He lifted his eyes and stared at Robin, as if he scarcely saw him at all.

"He understood," Amyas said. "I told him that if he followed me, he must not make any noise. And he tried to keep quiet, till he ran across the trail of that bear. And then—when the bullet hit him—straight through the belly—he would not howl. He knew that he ought to keep quiet—so he lay there. I might have gone back to the hut and left him dying here—He—he licked my boot when I—when I shot him through the head——"

Robin, whose emotions had boiled up into excited speech over the fallen buck, was utterly dumb before this tragedy. He dropped down in the snow beside Amyas.

"Don't touch him," cried Amyas, holding the dead dog closer to his breast. Then he forced his stiff lips into the ghost of a smile. "I am sorry," he added, and laid the dog's head on Robin's knee. Robin had been—he was—"his friend." He could deny him nothing; not even his dog, his Mille Vaches, who would never chase cows any more.

Over the dog's bleeding, shattered head, Robin held out his hand.

"Amyas, will you ever forgive me? I'm a rotten shot. I've got no—no nerve—no guts. I don't belong here with you and old Lajoie and Eli. Whenever I'm with you, I make a fool of myself, somehow. I've always felt it. But I never would acknowledge it before."

But Amyas was not listening to Robin.

"Hush," he said. "Eli and old Joseph are coming back. They—they shall never hear about Mille Vaches. I will pretend that he got out of the hut and was lost. Help me."

Robin's sensibilities had been quickened during the past few days. He understood now what Amyas was trying to do; trying to protect his friend from the humiliation of having to admit that he had been frightened of an imaginary bear and had killed a harmless dog. Protecting him—and at what a cost!

Amyas scraped a hole in the snow and laid Mille Vaches in it. He longed to pat the bleeding muzzle, to lay his own cheek once more on the cold nose. But there was not time. Hurriedly, he and Robin piled snow over the last visible patch of gray fur; laid a stone and a heavy branch or two over the little mound. When Eli and Lajoie came up the hill, they found Robin and Amyas sitting on their snowshoes, awaiting them in silence.

"It is a fine head, Monsieur Robin," panted Eli. "Too heavy to take back with us now. Joseph and I will fetch it, with the skin and the meat, this afternoon." Then turning to Amyas, he asked, "What was in the bushes down there?"

Robin glanced anxiously at Amyas. For Amyas had not seemed to hear. It was one thing to sacrifice to your friend the love of your dog; it was another, a far more serious thing, to tell a direct lie. Eli repeated his question, angrily. Amyas, he thought, was always a sulky, impolite fellow.

"There was nothing there," Robin interposed. "I looked."

"Aha," chuckled Eli. "So Amyas let you go alone, Monsieur. Doubtless he was afraid of the bear. I think that I will go and look myself." Robin leaped forward, barring Eli's way. Old Lajoie was watching the little scene in silence, wiping the icicles from his gray mustache.

"No, Eli, no," Robin almost shouted. "I tell you I've looked. Besides, I'm tired out. I want to go back now—right away. And I've had enough of hunting. We'll start back for Cap à l'Ours tomorrow morning."

Eli began to object. There was still another caribou to be shot. They had planned to stay a week. He was angry, for he was getting two dollars a day, and that, in those days, was very good pay indeed. He had counted on at least seven days of it. Somehow he sensed that Amyas was to blame for this sudden change in Robin's plans. He glowered at the young man as he put on his snow-shoes.

"Never mind, Eli," said Robin, too tense and too exhausted to bear any further explanations. "I engaged you and Lajoie for a week. You'll be paid just the same. You walk back with me. Let Amyas go on ahead with Lajoie and get the fire started in the hut. I didn't realize how tired I was. You see, Eli," he added, as Lajoie and Amyas started off by themselves, covering the ground rapidly with the long slow lope of men who had ranged the woods on snow-shoes all their lives, "you see, I'm not much of a huntsman, really. I've had about enough."

Eli was all smiles once more. He protested violently.

"But that was a great shot of yours, Monsieur Robin."

"It was pure luck." Somehow Robin felt the need of humiliating himself. And yet Eli's praises were sweet in his ears. He could depend on him to tell others—next summer, perhaps—about the "beau coup" that Monsieur Randolph had made at La Galette. As soon as the figures of Amyas and Lajoie had disappeared in the distance, he put to his companion a question that had been hovering on his tongue ever since the evening before. "Tell me, Eli, what do you know about Amyas Dufour, anyway? About his family, I mean. Did you ever see his father? Or hear anything about—about his—grandparents?"

Eli licked his lips. Here was a situation after his own heart. He entirely misinterpreted Robin's interest in Amyas' forebears. He imagined that Robin had for some reason or other quarreled with Amyas. When he and Lajoie had come upon them a little while ago, sitting on their snow-shoes, the young men had been very quiet. Something or other had happened, Eli thought. Probably they had had some disagreement. Now was the time to put a spoke or two in the wheel of Amyas' new-found superiority. Eli had not forgiven him the lofty condescension with which he, an unknown orphan, had beaten down Eli from his original demand of two dollars and a half to two dollars a day, when engaging him for the hunting expedition. He might just as well have had that extra fifty cents a day. Well, here was a chance to pay back the stuck-up orphan.

And so, as he and Robin plodded along through and over the snow, on their way back to the hut, he opened the treasures of his knowledge. It was, of course, not for him to cast any aspersions on the legitimate birth of another Christian man; he would not do such a thing for untold gold. But he, Eli, was named after his grandfather, Eli Martel, and this grandfather, a man of the utmost piety, had once told him—thus and so. Or, to be exact, since even in small matters it was best to stick to the exact truth, his grandfather had not told him all this directly; but he, Eli Martel the Third, had heard him tell it to his father, Eli Martel the Second—whose soul, he hoped, was by this time well out of Purgatory.

So Robin listened to the same tale that Eli had once told Monsieur le Curé Hervey, on that lonely, hungry drive of a Sunday morning to the quiet, deserted farmhouse at Grand Fond—the house in which two dead people lay, while two uncared-for children ran wild in the neighboring woods.

"But yes, Monsieur Robin," Eli said, finally, with a sigh of regret for having been forced to touch on such unsavory matters, "blood will tell in the end. Even the name is a strange one, is it not? Amyas! I know of no saint in Heaven called by that name. Why should a baptized Christian bear it? I, for one, do not even know how it is spelled. Yes, yes, a bastard name—and bastard blood. That is no good inheritance."

"I find it somewhat hard to believe," said Robin, and Eli scowled. "As a rule, from what I have learned in these past summers, your women, even the worst of them, do not have babies which do not belong to their husbands."

Eli was all smiles again.

"That is true," he nodded. "But I heard my grandfather say that this mother of Amyas' father, Pelletier her name was, I think—the family is extinct among us now—was of a very great and unusual beauty. And as you know, Monsieur—" Eli crossed himself piously—"beauty is a snare of the devil. It is not good to marry a woman who has too much of it."

Robin abruptly changed the subject, rather to Eli's disappointment. For he could have gone on for another half-hour embroidering his tale of the Amyas Dufours.

"I hear," Robin said, "that you are now the *facteur,* the agent of the Seigneur."

"Scarcely that," Eli answered with a humble shrug. "Rather his interpreter among our people. I collect some of the rents of the outlying farms. I draw up papers, with the help of Monsieur le Shérif, and he, the Seigneur, signs them. Often he does not read them. He trusts me."

"And what name does he sign?" asked Robin. His throat felt a little dry. "I mean, what is the family name of the Seigneurs of Mont Sainte Marie Manor? I suppose I ought to know, but you call him 'the Seigneur,' and the English people call him 'the Laird.' "

"The name," said Eli, with great pride, "comes from the land of the Scottish people. It has always been the same, ever since the first of the family took over the Seigneurie from the French lord to whom the King of France had first granted it. I have seen all the old papers. The Seigneur keeps them in a locked chest."

"But the name," persisted Robin.

"Ah, yes. It is hard for us French to pronounce. But the Seigneur himself has taught me how it is properly to be said."

And Eli rolled off his tongue an ancient Scottish name.

Robin nodded his head. He had thought he knew the name; but now he was sure. Sure also that he had seen it only yesterday afternoon, written twice, once at the bottom of an old letter, and once in an old marriage certificate.

He took a long, deep breath. Eli wondered a little at his silence; but thought that Robin was overtired and saving his wind for the long walk. In reality, tired though he was in body, Robin's mind was racing on ahead of his feet to the hut where Amyas was waiting for him, making the fire, cooking the dinner—he, Amyas Dufour. And racing on still farther—all the way to Bonne Rivière, to the Seigneurie, to the unkempt, unhappy man who sat thumbing a month-old English periodical in a lonely, untidy room.

By the time Robin and Eli reached the hut, Robin's imagination had swept away all difficulties. He was a lawyer after all, wasn't he? He had friends in the law. He would set the legal machinery in motion, first in that little American town just across the Quebec border, where a marriage had been performed before a Justice of the Peace so many years ago; and then in Quebec itself, in Bonne Rivière, at Mont Sainte Marie Manor, too. And when all was over, when the legal machinery had ground the present Seigneur out and a new one in, then he, Robin, would say, "I killed your dog. But see what a return I have made!" And later, in summers to come, he, Robin, would stay at the Seigneurie with Amyas; they would sit before the big fireplace in the great dining room, with its heavy, dull-red curtains, and there they would talk of the days when the Seigneur once cooked Robin's supper, out in the woods at La Galette, on the evening of the day when Robin had made that great shot and had brought down a big buck—at over a hundred yards.

CHAPTER SIX

Fealty

"La chasse de Monsieur Robin"—the hunting expedition of Monsieur Robin—as the people at Cap à l'Ours always called it, returned to civilization in the midst of great acclamation. People kept dropping in at the Pilote House to see the big head and to congratulate Robin on his shooting. They were disappointed when Robin insisted that he must be leaving at once. They had arranged suppers and *veillées* for several days to come. Everyone seemed to want him at least to break bread in their houses. But now he was in a fever to be gone.

On the long walk and the longer drive, coming out of the woods, he had not talked much with Amyas. There seemed to be a sense of restraint between them. Neither of them had mentioned Mille Vaches, although both often thought of the little pile of bloody snow lying alone far up in the hills, miles beyond La Galette. But Amyas had made one request. He begged to be allowed to sleep at the Pilote House during the rest of Robin's stay there, instead of going to Corinne's or to the Presbytère at Cap à l'Ours. He avoided Eli. So did Robin, who paid him off and bade him good-by at once.

Meanwhile, Amyas made all the necessary arrangements for Robin's return journey. He had secured a horse and a sleigh that would take Robin to Baie St. Paul, where he could get another sleigh to take him the rest of the way to Quebec. The frozen caribou meat he had given away among the villages. The three skins and the one big head, Robin was taking with him to a celebrated taxidermist in Montreal.

On the last afternoon of his visit, Robin found Amyas trying to fold and pack the few clothes that he had brought with him. No man had ever packed his belongings for him before. Somehow, it gave him a sense of close contact with Amyas, a pleasant feeling of dependence on him, of trust, and of kindliness. He would miss this strange, silent, rather awkward youth, who was, after all, only a few years younger than himself, and yet who, in so many ways, seemed to Robin an immature boy.

"Let's go for a walk, Amyas," he said. "It will be dark in an hour. And on the way back I think I'll stop at Theophile Bouchard's and tell them that I've got to start so early tomorrow that I can't come to their house tonight. You and I might have supper together at the hotel."

They walked down the village street, and cut across the snow-covered golf links, passing behind the boarded-up club-house, and so on to the road to

Bonne Rivière. It was too cold for many people to be about on foot. People waved to them occasionally from passing sleighs; but they had the side of the road to themselves. Crossing the river at Bonne Rivière, they walked down the farther shore of the St. Lawrence, until they could see the big stone chimney of Mont Sainte Marie Manor rising above the bare trees.

"We'll be late for supper," said Amyas, as Robin still strode on in silence. Neither had said a word for the last half hour.

"Never mind. I want to take a look at something."

"That gate is private," protested Amyas, for Robin had turned abruptly off the road, and was opening a big double gate at the end of a long, winding road. "That is the back way to the Seigneurie."

"I know," nodded Robin. "But there is no one about. I want to pay this place a winter visit. It looks so different now."

Amyas followed, rather ill at ease. The short winter twilight died out entirely as they walked up the back road and in the darkness came up abruptly against the kitchen door of the big, silent house. There were no lights in the back windows. No sign of anyone anywhere.

"I've a good mind to call on the Laird," said Robin. "I suppose I ought to say good-by to him."

"Not now," protested Amyas. "You cannot get in. Everybody in the village knows that he is afraid of burglars. Old Stéphanie Gagnier, who cooks for him, goes away at six, and then he locks all the doors. I know. I have heard Eli tell about it."

Beckoning Amyas to follow, Robin began to walk softly around the house. Now they were standing at a corner of the big, front veranda, looking down across the snow-covered lawn to the St. Lawrence.

In the darkness Amyas tugged at Robin's sleeve, and pointed behind them. Facing about, Robin saw that a thin shaft of light was coming from one of the deep windows at the side of the house.

"I'm going to peek in," he whispered. "Oh, Amyas, do you remember the time I peeked in the window of Corinne's house with Léontine?"

"Hush, Monsieur Robin. Come away. The Seigneur has a gun, Eli says. He keeps it near him at night. He might think we were burglars, and fire."

But Robin's insatiable curiosity had gotten the better of his judgment, even of his manners. He tiptoed across the soft snow, and looked in over the sill of the window. Amyas, shaking in his shoes, followed; he would have followed Robin anywhere in those days—to protect him. Robin could feel his companion's breath on his cheek, as Amyas pressed close behind.

They looked into a room in which both had stood only a few days before—the Seigneur's study, lined with books and maps and old portraits; but untidy, dusty, uncared for beyond description. At a desk, set at right angles to the window, sat the Seigneur, almost exactly as Robin had seen him when he had come to present his shooting license. His coat was off, his hair disheveled; he wore no collar, and the hand that was stretched out to a bottle on the table before him shook pitiably. He was not reading, but staring, moodily, stonily, into the fire. It seemed to Robin as if he had never seen such a look of absolute despair on the face of any human being. He looked like some timid animal shut up in a cage, from which it cannot escape—a cage that is only slightly less fearful than the many imminent dangers that surround it from enemies unseen and unknown.

As the two young men outside the window stood watching in silence, the man inside the room seemed to come to some sudden decision. He filled his glass from the whisky bottle, lifted it, and waved it about the room, as if drinking a toast to the portraits that stared down at him from the walls. Then, putting down his glass, he reached out his hand for something that was lying on the desk among his papers.

Robin stood motionless, as though held down by an evil dream from which he was struggling to awake, but could not. He knew that he ought to cry out, to beat at the window, to make the man stop from raising the revolver slowly—slowly—to his temple. Now his finger was on the trigger—now—now——

With a sudden sense of relief, he felt his breath come back into his lungs; he opened his mouth to yell. But from behind him, a hand slipped forward and closed tightly over his gaping lips.

And before he could free himself, before he could even turn, he saw the man in the room throw down the revolver, and then fall forward on the desk, his shoulders heaving, and his outstretched hands clasping and clawing at the edge of the desk.

A moment later Robin was letting Amyas hurry him off through the darkness. They did not speak until they saw the lights of Bonne Rivière. Then Amyas touched Robin on the arm, very humbly.

"You will forgive, Monsieur Robin, that I laid hands upon you," he said, softly. "But I heard you begin to make a noise. And I was frightened. The Seigneur might have fired at the window."

"But—" stammered Robin—"I had to do something. He was going to——"

"Ah no, Monsieur Robin," Amyas whispered; "not he. Maybe he would like to. But he has not the courage. I have heard Eli tell how every winter he becomes so despondent that he talks of doing—what you saw. Some day, Eli says, he will do it, perhaps. And I think," he added with a dry chuckle, "that when Eli is good and ready, he will let him do it. Only he is not ready yet. I know Eli Martel. He is a bad man."

"Is he a liar?" queried Robin, with sudden anxiety.

"No. But sometimes he tells the truth so that it sounds like a lie."

Robin and Amyas were late for supper. But Madame Pilote had kept it hot. Robin begged Amyas to sit and eat with him. But Amyas refused. It was not fitting. He stood behind Robin's chair, filled his glass, took away his plate, and pervaded Robin again with that same old sense of protection and confidence.

As Robin was undressing for bed, Amyas, who had the room next door, came in with a glass of water.

"Amyas," Robin said, abruptly, "how would you like to be the Seigneur? To own all the land about here, to have that big stone house, and sit at the head of that long oak table in the dining room, with a lot of beautiful women and well-dressed men, to——"

"Humph," interrupted Amyas, "and to sit alone in front of the fire and try to make up my mind to blow out my brains! Non, merci."

"But you might not want to do that at all. You might marry, you——"

"Monsieur Robin, do not speak foolishness. I am Amyas Dufour. I do not always have a good time in this world, but I do not want to blow out my brains. Although—" he added—"if I did want to, I should not make such a fuss about it. I should get it done and over as quickly as possible."

"Yes, by God," murmured Robin, "I believe you would. Good-night."

He got into bed. The room was icy cold. He was just dozing off when he was awakened by a sound from the other side of the partition against which his bed was placed. Through the thin boards, he could hear an indistinct sound, like the sound of a sob choked back but not quite suppressed.

He knocked on the wall. Then put his lips close to the partition.

"Amyas," he called, softly. "Amyas."

"Oui, Monsieur. Are you ill? I will come at once."

"No, don't move. The rooms are too cold. But, Amyas, I have just made up my mind about something. Would you leave Cap à l'Ours and come down to the States with me? I need somebody to take care of my things—my horse—and my clothes. To make me feel comfortable. I can't pay you very much to begin with. But I've got enough money for your fare. And I'll get more when I'm at home. I can't—I can't give you back Mille Vaches—but—I want to give you something. Can you hear me?"

"Oui, Monsieur."

It was a still, surprised voice, but it shook with suppressed happiness.

"And you will come?"

"Mais oui, Monsieur, certainement. And, Monsieur Robin, I will work—I will do——"

"You will do nothing except go to sleep. Tomorrow I will tell Monsieur le Curé that I am taking you with me. Good-night."

"Bonne nuit, Monsieur. Dormez bien."

"Bonne chance, Amyas."

Robin was soon fast asleep. But after he began to breathe deeply, the door of his room was softly opened. In the winter moonlight Amyas stood there, a clumsy, unlovely figure in his rough, wrinkled blue shirt, that flapped about his thin, brown legs. Noiselessly he crept into the room. Very slowly he went up to the bed. First, bending down, he kissed the back of Robin's hand, that lay outside the blanket—his act of fealty; then, stooping down, he picked up Robin's shoes and, clasping them to his breast, tiptoed silently out of the room.

PART V

CHAPTER ONE

Transplantation

No one who knew Amyas Dufour in his old age ever guessed that he had once lived for nearly six months in "The States." Indeed, even to Amyas, himself, it all seemed like some confused, unpleasant dream that was better forgotten, anyway. Yet never again was he to know the intense excitement of that journey with Robin Randolph from Cap à l'Ours to Quebec, where they took a train for New York. In those days there were no immigration quotas, no difficulty in passing the American border. A day later, after four crowded, fascinating hours in New York, Amyas found himself standing at the door of a house in a long block in another and smaller city—a block in which each house touched its neighbor in a strange, crowded way, as if the houses were elbowing one another in order to get a little more room. Robin was paying the taxi-driver—the driver of a horseless carriage that had shocked Amyas' sense of decency. For a carriage without a horse was something like a woman without her skirts.

The door opened, and Amyas found himself staring at his sister, Léontine; a Léontine transformed almost beyond recognition. It was not so much her white apron, or even her cap; they were familiar. But she had done her hair in a new way; she walked differently; and she said, in English, Léontine did, "The lower door, please, for trades people and servants."

Then Robin, running up behind him, pushed Amyas aside, and left him standing in the hall with a Léontine too astonished to speak, while he himself hurried on into a room on the right. Amyas heard Anne's voice; the voice of his Mademoiselle.

"What, Robin—Amyas? What a crazy thing to do! Well, it's your responsibility, not mine."

Then, out into the hall she came.

Was this his Mademoiselle? This wonderfully dressed personage, with swishing skirts and high-heeled shoes? Where was her old gray sweater? And her old leathern camp coat? But her voice was the same. She held out her hand.

"Well, Amyas, this is a surprise, indeed. I think that Monsieur Robin might at least have telegraphed. But we'll put you up somewhere until my brother finds a room for you. Léontine, take Amyas down into the kitchen and give him something hot to eat. It's late, but the cook won't mind, I suppose."

A sudden sense of depression came over Amyas as he followed his sister clumsily down a long, dark flight of stairs at the back of the hall, down into a kitchen where a big fat woman in a blue-checked apron was reading a newspaper by the kitchen table.

"Do not incommode yourself, Nellie," Léontine said, with a deference that rather annoyed Amyas. At home Léontine never used that tone of voice except to Monsieur le Curé. "This is my brother. I will get him a cup of coffee."

"Then be sure you wash up the dishes after him," grumbled the big fat woman. "He hadn't ought to come visiting you so late."

"Mister Robin brought him from Canada," Léontine explained. "He is going to——" Turning to Amyas, she added in French, "What is it that you are going to do, anyway?"

"I am to be the—companion of Monsieur Robin. To take care of him. To be—his friend."

"Don't talk that foreign gibberish in my kitchen," interrupted the fat woman. "If I've told you that once, I've told it to you a hundred times."

"My brother," Léontine said in English, "is to be the valet of Mister Robin."

"But," protested Amyas, "that is not what I said. Monsieur Robin——"

"Talk American, can't you?" the cook interrupted, but with a new glance of something like respect at Amyas. "Well, get him the coffee. Only tell him not to make a mess while he's eating. Look here, Léontine, here's a bit in the society notes about Madam's dinner on Thursday. Miss Anne's fiancy is to be there." She began to read from the paper, following the lines with a stubby finger.

"'At this dinner the engagement of the eldest daughter of the house to Mr. Henry Aspinwall of Toronto, Canada, will be formally announced. Among the guests will be Miss Cornelia Fanshawe—the daughter of one of our prominent and most respected citizens. It is rumored that another engagement may soon be announced in the Randolph family, for Mr. Robin Randolph has returned from a shooting expedition in Canada in order to be present at this dinner.—The decorations will be furnished by——'"

"I notice," said the cook, breaking off abruptly, "that they don't say nothin' about the one that furnishes the food they'll eat. I'll be sweatin' in this damn kitchen while they're drinkin' fizz up-stairs. Who'd want to be a cook anyway!"

She subsided into her paper, while Amyas and Léontine sat down at the kitchen table, and with their heads close together, talked in quiet undertones.

"Oh, why did you come, Amyas?" Léontine asked, breaking into her brother's excited description of the railroad and the horseless carriage. "You won't like it. It is all so different. Why did you come?"

Amyas scratched his head. After all, why had he come?

"Monsieur Robin asked me," he stammered, at last. "He wanted me. He said, 'Come.' So I came. And then I wanted——"

Léontine nodded.

"To see Mademoiselle Anne, I suppose," she said. "Well, you won't see much of her. And what you do see, won't be your Mademoiselle Anne at all."

"Oh, yes it will," Amyas persisted. "She is always the same."

But as the days lengthened into weeks, Amyas came to believe that his sister had been right. Neither Anne nor Robin seemed the same people whom he had known and loved at Cap à l'Ours. He could not realize that he was merely seeing them from an entirely different angle. In Canada they had been, in a sense, his friends, people with whom he could talk intimately, even though he served them. But here, in this crowded, straitened city, he was cut off from them entirely. There was no common life of golf or of camping or of fishing on the basis of which they could all meet on the same ground. The lives that they led at home were so entirely different from his own that they had only one point of contact, that of servant and master.

Of Madame Randolph, Amyas saw very little. She was kind in a patronizing way. She had one of Robin's dinner jackets altered to fit Amyas and told Léontine to teach him how to wait at table. She decided that she could save money by using "Robin's man" instead of paying for an extra waiter. Moreover, she was brimming over with loving kindness these days. Her divorced husband had consolidated his furniture manufacturing business with some huge corporation; he was making a great deal of money; her alimony and the allowances for the children had been increased. She was even considering asking him to Anne's wedding in June. And in these days she hovered about Anne with a devotion that was almost oppressive. She was playing to the utmost the rôle of the devoted mother about to part forever from her eldest daughter.

As for Anne, she simply allowed herself to be carried along on the tide of her mother's happiness. She was almost thirty. If she did not marry Henry Aspinwall, no other man might ever ask her to marry him; and she did want an establishment of her own. She wanted her own life. Henry was doing quite well. His new book had been a success. She and he would go abroad and take a villa in Florence, where he could write; or they would go to Scotland, where she could play golf. Besides, Henry was always so dependable. He had been devoted to her for so long. He was a "one-woman man"; she would be perfectly safe with him. Life might not be exactly exciting, but after all, marrying Henry was the easiest way out. The easiest way to freedom. The easiest way to cut loose from her family.

Her mother, of course, was pleasant enough now. But suppose she broke her engagement with Henry; suppose she decided to go on living with her mother, and with the younger girls, with whom she had absolutely nothing in common? Well, she knew exactly what kind of hell life would soon become. No, thanks; she had had more than enough of that already. She would try to make Henry a good wife. And now that she had at last made up her mind to marry him, she felt relaxed, contented, almost happy.

In only one thing had she opposed his wishes. He had wanted to spend their honeymoon at Cap à l'Ours. For some reason she had grown panicky at once. To become a wife, up there where she had lived for so long the life of a maid! The idea revolted her. It was better to go abroad at once; to get into unfamiliar surroundings. She felt instinctively that Cap à l'Ours represented something in her life to which she would say a definite good-by when she became Henry Aspinwall's wife. Of course, she would always love the place. If she had not accepted Henry, she and Robin would have gone up there again in the summer. They could have taken a tiny cottage together. The old Randolph cottage, of course, was no longer theirs. She had heard that Madame La Rochefoucault had taken it on a long lease and was doing it over in pale blue. How strange it would be to see other people on the old veranda. And she would see them some day. She would see Cap à l'Ours again; some summer, of course. After she and Henry had been married awhile, they would go there together for a visit to old Mrs. Aspinwall. By that time there might be children——

Thoughts like these were usually interrupted by Mrs. Randolph, who would come into Anne's room with the dressmaker. Then there would be fittings and alterations, and Anne would stop thinking about the future. The present was delightful enough. So, like a diver who swoops down from a height into strange water, the depth of which he thinks that he can judge from the summit of the springboard, Anne made ready to dive into Holy Matrimony.

Naturally, she had no time for Amyas. And Amyas had too much time for himself. Robin had an apartment a few squares distant from his mother's house. And Amyas lived in a tiny room on the topmost floor, where there were "servants' quarters." The other servants, all women, mostly Irish or Swedish, frightened him. They made advances that were almost violently repulsed; then they laughed at him and let him alone. There were plenty of other "fellows" without wasting one's day out on a dumb Canuck.

Amyas served Robin's breakfast, tidied up the apartment, brought Robin's horse from the livery stable, and rode it back again. He ate in the Randolph kitchen—the only man in a group of hurrying, sweating, often quarrelsome women. The only person except Léontine who was really kind to him was the fat cook. She had suddenly determined that she would like to learn French, and soon she learned to say "Je vous aime" and to squeeze Amyas' hand under the table; until, one day, he slapped her on the cheek in a friendly way and told her not to be such a damn fool. After that they became firm friends.

Lonelier far than when he was working in the pulp mill at Rivière de Loup, Amyas watched the days of the winter go by. At Rivière de Loup he had had at least his friend the Curé and the parish church. But here, in this big city, he was adrift. The Randolphs worked their servants as hard on Sundays as on other days of the week. Léontine appalled Amyas by her admission that she had not been inside a church since she had come from Cap à l'Ours with Mademoiselle Anne. But Amyas refused to follow her example; he thought too much of his "immortal soul." On Sundays Robin slept till noon. And on weekdays he was always out in the evenings. So Amyas set forth in search of a church.

He was too timid, too insecure in his English to ask many questions. He wandered into some strange tabernacles. But at last, in a very poor part of the city, he saw a group of people entering the doors of a building that had a cross over the roof and a statue of some saint in an outside niche. It was early one Sunday morning, in March; Amyas had been wandering about, trying to kill time until Monsieur Robin should be ready for a noonday breakfast. And through the open church door, he caught a glimpse of things familiar; of an altar, of statues, and of a tiny twinkling flame in a hanging lamp. He slipped in and was looking for a corner to stand in, unobserved, when a priest, in a black soutane and biretta—how familiar they looked!—came up to him.

"I don't suppose," this priest said in English, "that by any chance you know how to serve mass? My server has not turned up and I've no one here in the congregation at this time of day except old men and women."

Amyas smiled; he had never been afraid of priests. He stammered something in English.

"Oh," said the priest, "I see. You are a Canadian. I know some parts of your country well." And then he repeated his request in French.

"Mais oui, Monsieur le Curé," Amyas answered, with a happy sensation of homecoming. "I am of Bonne Rivière, near Cap à l'Ours. For many years I have served at the altar there."

"Strange," murmured the priest, in French. "I know the place. I was chaplain there one summer. I knew Monsieur Bienvenu, the Curé, quite well. Once when I was out of mass wine, he lent me a bottle of his." Then, after a moment's hesitation, he went on, "You are a Roman Catholic, of course. We are Catholics here, too. But our mass is in English. Perhaps I ought not to ask you——"

Amyas clasped both hands together fervently. Thus in the old days at the Orphelinat, Sister Onésime had taught him to stand when asking a favor of Monsieur le Curé or of the Mother Superior.

"Ah, please, Monsieur le Curé," he pleaded. "Please let me. If I make some mistakes, the Good God will not mind."

"You are right, my son," said the priest. "The Good God will not mind."

He beckoned Amyas to follow him. The server's cassock was too short for Amyas; the surplice was rumpled, not very clean. But after lighting the candles, while the priest was vesting, Amyas folded his palms together, crossed his thumbs in the proper manner, and preceded "Monsieur le Curé" to the altar.

The fact that the priest spoke in English did not bother Amyas at all. He knew only a little more English than he did Latin. So to him the liturgy was in a language not entirely understandable; and that was quite correct.

"Thank you," the priest said, when he had removed his vestments, and Amyas had extinguished the candles. "You made no mistakes. Did it—did it seem very different—in English, I mean?"

"Oh, Monsieur le Curé," stammered Amyas, "it was just like home—just like home—or almost. Might I come again?"

For a moment the priest hesitated; then he nodded.

"I must not keep you away, my son," he said. "For that the Good God would mind very much indeed. Only make me one promise. If anything should happen to make you change your mind and not want to come, then drop in at my rooms, just next to the church, and tell me. For I shall want to arrange for another server."

As Amyas left the sacristy, the priest said to a woman in a nun's habit, who had come in to put away the vestments, "Sister, I think I've done a questionable thing. That server today was a lonely French Canadian lad—a Romanist, naturally. Ought I to have sent him around to Father O'Neil, or to Father Weissenmueller? You know what they think about Canucks. I hadn't the heart—but of course, he'll find out soon enough."

It was a whole month before Amyas did find out. And then it was through his friend, the fat cook. One day, as he came in for his luncheon, he noticed a man in black, with a round collar about his very red neck and a pleated black bib below it, who was standing in the basement door talking earnestly with Nellie Donavan. And Nellie, the cook, had her worn pocketbook in her hand.

"Sure, Father, but two dollars is all I can afford. The Holy Saints know I want to do my share, but ——" Catching sight of Amyas, she beckoned to him. "Amyas"—she pronounced it "Hairmeiass"—"come here. This is Father O'Neil. Father, this is our Mr. Robin's valet. He's a Catholic—one of them French Canadians."

Now to Amyas, priests were people who wore black soutanes. Never in his life had he seen a priest in black trousers and a black coat. He became suspicious at once.

"Do you go to mass on Sundays, young man?" demanded Father O'Neil.

Amyas nodded. He did not like this big man at all—fat, he was—almost as fat as the cook. Yet because he was a friend of Nellie's, who had been kind to him, Amyas was disposed to be decently polite.

"And to what church, young man? Not to Father Weissenmueller, I suppose?"

Amyas shook his head.

"I do not know the priest's name," he said. "But I know the name of the church. I serve mass there every Sunday. Monsieur le Curé has been very kind to me."

"And what other Catholic church is there in town, indeed, I'd like to know," Father O'Neil interposed. He did not know any French, and he disliked the French, anyway. Were they not all a lot of Free Masons and unbelieving atheists!

Rather proudly, Amyas gave the name of the little church in the slums that had become rather dear to him.

And then, to his intense surprise, the fat cook and the man in black began to talk and to shout at him. He could not understand. What was it that they were saying? What had he done? Finally, he made out a word or two.

"I do not believe you," he said, as the man in black paused for breath. "It is all just the same as at home—or almost. And Monsieur le Curé speaks French. He knows my village——"

"Very well, you young reprobate," the man in black said. "You tell me where you come from, and I'll write to your priest. I'll tell him that you've renounced our Holy Religion and become a dirty Protestant.—Why—why, you might almost as well have gone to Father Weissenmueller's church—almost; but not quite."

So, after some two or more weeks, there came to Amyas a letter from Cap à l'Ours, written in the clear, beautiful French of Monsieur Bienvenu. "Remember, I do not blame you at all, my son," Monsieur le Curé wrote among other things. "I have the honor to count among my friends the clergyman who has been kind to you. He was here last summer, at the new little Anglican church on the Boulevard. He believes that he is a good Catholic. Let us both pray that he may become one in God's good time. But meanwhile, you must go to your own church—to the Reverend Father O'Neil—or to the other priest of the German congregation. Believe me, I know all that you would say. But in a foreign country, such as that in which you are living, where the church is still in the condition of a missionary body, you must put up with many things for the sake of The Faith. Be sure that you go to your Easter duties."

Amyas took the letter with him when he went that same evening to make the visit that he had promised before giving up serving at mass at the little church in the slums. He put it into the hand of his friend, the priest "who had been kind to him."

"I knew that it would come," said the priest, "and I did wrong, perhaps, to let you get into this trouble. I ought to have written to Monsieur Bienvenu myself.—But I—well, to tell the truth, Amyas, I love your country; I love its church and its people. And I loved to hear you speak its language. Now do as you are told. Go to mass regularly at St. Mary's Star of the Sea——"

"What a name for a church!" interposed Amyas.

"Hush, you do not understand English. Go to your Easter duties."

"I will not go to confession to that man in black pants."

"Ah, yes, you will. If you do not, the Good God will mind very much—and I shall reproach myself, also."

So Amyas went. But somehow, neither in Father O'Neil's church where he knelt side by side with the fat cook, nor even in Father Weissenmueller's sanctuary, where Franz Steiner, who took care of the Randolphs' furnace, sang in the choir, was he at ease, or happy.

CHAPTER TWO

Monsieur de Morelle

"Oh, Robin, what a perfectly gorgeous present!" Anne exclaimed, as she unpacked the set of gold coffee spoons that her brother had ordered from New York. "You know you ought not to have spent so much money on me."

"Glad you like them, Anne," said Robin, patting his sister on the shoulder. "Don't worry about the cost."

"But you know," Anne persisted, "that you ought to be saving something if you're making so much money. You must be spending an awful lot, what with your apartment, and your horse, and your supper parties—and your man. Robin, why did you ever bring Amyas here?"

"I don't know exactly," Robin said. "At the time I felt as if I needed him; as if I wanted to do something for him—and some day I'll tell you a secret about Amyas. I'm having some legal inquiries made now. They may come to nothing. On the other hand—I guess I might as well tell you now."

Rapidly, he explained to her the contents of the two old papers that he had discovered sewed inside the Prayer-book of Amyas' grandmother.

"I've shown them to Morrell, and he——"

"I don't like that partner of yours very much," interposed Anne. "He says he's an English Canadian, born in Montreal; but I'd be willing to swear that his name was originally Morel (rhyming with bell), instead of Morrell (rhyming with sorrell or quarrel)."

"You don't know what a fine fellow he is," persisted Robin. "Why, he does more than half the work of our office. I was lucky to get in with him at all. And you know that I didn't have much to put into the firm; only great-aunt Julia's little legacy. It came just in time."

"Well, and what does he think about Amyas?"

"He has a wonderful scheme.—He's interested in all sorts of things. One of his cousins owns part of a pulp mill at Rivière de Loup; you know—just across the river from Cap à l'Ours. Morrell says that all the wooded land on our side of the St. Lawrence is going to be enormously valuable soon. Take the Seigneurie Mont Sainte Marie, for example. It runs inland more than ten miles, and is worth nothing now, most all of it. But some day the lumber rights there will be enormously profitable. So—so if we—or someone with a little money could buy up property back of Bonne Rivière and hold it for a while—we'd make no end of money."

"But what has all that got to do with Amyas?"

"Well, we haven't got that all worked out yet," said Robin, a little uneasily. "If Amyas should really have any claim to the Seigneurie, he'd be glad to—to sell us parts of it, because we—we helped him to get it. And even if there's nothing in his claim, it will scare the present Laird, make him think his tenure is insecure, and make him willing to sell to us. Between you and me, I think if it wasn't for his feeling of family tradition, he'd be glad enough to sell the whole place for a ticket to Quebec. I saw him—up there—in December."

Robin shuddered a little. These memories were not pleasant.

"Here, Robin," said Anne abruptly—she was holding out to him the box of gold coffee spoons—"you'd better take these back. I think that you and your friend Morrell are playing a dirty trick on Amyas. And I don't want any presents that are going to be paid for out of it."

"Oh, come, Anne," protested Robin. "I've got plenty of money without Amyas. Besides, Amyas doesn't know that he has any claim to the Seigneurie at all. It doesn't interest him."

"You've never told him, then? You're working behind his back? Oh, come in, Mother, what is it now?"

Robin escaped. He knew Anne's occasional tantrums of righteousness. As a child they had been altogether too frequent; but of late they had become easier to deal with. It was only in the summers, at

Cap à l'Ours, that she dominated Robin as she used to do in the days of their childhood. And there, he and she seemed closer together than at any other time during the year. Now, in the excitement of the wedding preparations, both were losing hold of the peculiar atmosphere that drew them together in the summer; and they were drifting farther and farther apart. Robin knew that Anne would soon forget all about Amyas. And so she did; for Mrs. Randolph kept her mind filled with other things.

"Anne, dear," said Mrs. Randolph, as Robin hurried away, "I do wish that you would speak to Robin. He's drinking far too much these days. He looks very badly when he comes to luncheon."

"I can't be my brother's keeper much longer, Mother," Anne answered, opening another package, another wedding present, that had just arrived. "Oh, look, Mother. See what Cornelia Fanshawe has sent me."

"Charming! Cornelia has always been a good friend. I don't see why Robin doesn't ask her to marry him. He has always been devoted to her during his Christmas holidays—and I've an idea that she cares for him."

Anne was not paying much attention. She was wondering whether she could not exchange the clock that Cornelia had sent her for more table silver—she had three clocks already.

"He'd better make haste, then," she said, carelessly. "I've noticed that Robin's new partner, that young Morrell, is very attentive to Cornelia. That fellow is going to get on in the world, Mother. I shouldn't care to stand in his way if I were a man."

"So glad that you reminded me, my dear," Mrs. Randolph purred. "Of course, I don't think that he has a chance with Cornelia. But after all, he is very presentable. He intimated once to me—in a perfectly nice way—that his people were originally of the French nobility—Vicomtes de Morelle or de Morrell. I do think that we ought to ask him to dinner."

"Then why don't you?" asked Anne, looking for the name of the jeweler from whom Cornelia had bought the unwelcome clock.

So Mrs. Randolph did ask him.

Had Henry Morrell, of the Vicomtes de Morelle, been wise, he would have refused that invitation. But he accepted with pleasure. And as it was a large dinner, taxing Mrs. Randolph's dining room to the uttermost, that able hostess, instead of wasting on an extra waiter the money that she needed badly enough for her daughter's wedding, put Amyas in his new dinner jacket and detailed Léontine to help out in the pantry, both of them under the immediate direction of pompous old John Albright, who had been for years the "public waiter" among Mrs. Randolph's social group, and who was always sent for to serve and to manage any unusually important function.

So it happened that Amyas, after filling the guests' glasses with sherry, came back to the pantry in great excitement.

"Léontine," he whispered, "a great honor has come to us tonight. I have just served the youngest son of old Morel, the butcher at Sainte Agnès. Look. You can see his face through the pantry door. You remember how he used to come down to Bonne Rivière—when I was a little boy at the Orphelinat—and how he used to sit on the seat of his father's wagon?"

"Hush, Amyas," whispered Léontine. "Let me look. Oh, you're wrong, little brother. He looks like old Morel's boy—but it can't be! He is sitting next to Mademoiselle Fanshawe—she who is to be—to be the bride of Monsieur Robin, some day. Have I not heard it all from the cook in the kitchen!"

"I am not wrong, Léontine. I looked at the card beside his place. In Madame's own hand, 'Monsieur de Morelle'—'de'!" Amyas snorted with disgust. "He did not use to spell his name like that when he was helping his father slaughter cows. But yes, Monsieur Albright," he added quickly, to old John, who came out just then from the dining room. "I will fill the glasses again—only you must help me open the champagne. I might do it badly."

Old John Albright grinned like a contented Cheshire cat. It was a pleasure to have such courteous assistants. Usually he had to fight in the pantry with untrained Irish or Scandinavian maids.

"Just the same," said Amyas again to Léontine, as he came back to the pantry after serving the champagne; "I do not like to bend over the shoulder of a Morel and ask, 'champagne or whisky and soda, sir?' No, I do not like it at all. What has he been doing these last ten years, since his father died, and someone else bought the butcher business?" Then, in a pause, while the guests were at their dessert, he turned deferentially to old John.

"Monsieur Albright, you know everybody worth knowing in this city. Who is the young—young gentleman, with the reddish hair, that sits next to Mademoiselle Fanshawe, who, herself, sits at Monsieur Robin's right hand?"

Old John was flattered. There was not much in the lives of the people whom he served that he did not know.

"He is, I am told, a French count—but an American citizen—a lawyer. Morrell, his name is. He is the new law partner of your Mister Robin. A bit of a climber, if you know what I mean. People say that he has his eye on Miss Fanshawe."

"So," said Amyas, softly. "Then I," he added under his breath to Léontine, "will have my eye on him. Yes, Monsieur Albright; shall I serve the liqueurs now? Or wait till the ladies have gone?"

CHAPTER THREE

The Love of Léontine

It was only a short two weeks before the wedding when the crash came.

For some time Amyas had been aware that everything was not going well with his Monsieur Robin. He had had to put him to bed twice in ten days. And Robin had forgotten to pay him at the end of the past three weeks. Amyas thought, at first, that the matter had simply slipped his young master's mind, and he borrowed cheerfully from Léontine. But on the third Saturday, he began to grow uneasy. He noticed, too, a whole stack of unopened bills on Robin's desk. And the proprietor of the livery stable had asked him to remind Mr. Randolph that he had neglected to pay for the care and feed of his horse.

Still, there was so much excitement in the Randolph house that Amyas did not have much time to worry about anything. Monsieur Henry, the bridegroom, had arrived; he was staying at Robin's apartment. Robin was to be his best man; and Miss Fanshawe, the maid-of-honor of Mademoiselle Anne. The fat cook spelled out to Léontine and Amyas everything that the newspapers printed about the "coming bridal festivities." And they printed a great deal.

Then, one Monday afternoon Robin telephoned his mother that he would not be at home for luncheon. There was nothing unusual about this. But Amyas had seen how ill his young master had looked that very morning, and how he had left his breakfast untouched. Léontine also seemed uneasy.

"I do not know what it is, Amyas," she said to her brother, as he was washing his hands in the kitchen, "but I am worried. Go and see how Monsieur Robin is. You can be back in twenty minutes."

Amyas ran most of the way to Robin's apartment. The front door, usually on the latch, was closed. His own key was in his other coat, in his little room at the top of the house. So he rang. No one came. He grew uneasy. He rang again. He listened. It seemed as if someone were breathing heavily—were listening—on the other side of the door.

"It is I—Amyas," he called.

The door opened slowly, and Amyas had a glimpse of Robin's distorted, twitching face. He was at his master's side in an instant.

"What is it, Monsieur Robin? What is the matter?"

"I thought"—panted the young man—"I thought it was—it was——"

But he got no farther. Amyas had his arms about him now; he was leading him into the little study. Here everything was in disorder. The floor was covered with partially torn papers. On a lounge lay an open suit-case, into which a few shirts and collars had been hastily thrown.

Amyas sat down on the arm of Robin's chair.

"You must tell me, Monsieur Robin," he said, as gently as though he were trying to soothe a frightened child. "If you do not tell me, how can I help? And you know that to help you, I would give my life—gladly. Men do not often speak of such things, but——"

Robin looked up at Amyas with a faint flush of color in his white cheeks.

"You will help me to get away—to get away—before——"

"Mais oui, Monsieur, certainement."

The old familiar phrase made Robin smile a little.

Then he poured out a hurried story that Amyas never fully understood. It was something about some papers—bonds—that were worth much money. Miss Fanshawe—Robin winced as he spoke her name—she had wanted to help the new firm—to give it business—and so she had persuaded her father to—to entrust them—the firm—with some sale—or purchase. And as a result of that business—there were these papers—these bonds—left in the firm's keeping. And he—Robin—had taken them. No, not stolen them, of course. How could Amyas imagine such a thing! Only borrowed them for a few days. There was something about stocks—Amyas did not know what they were—but if you bought them, they would be worth more very soon and you could then sell them and make money—lots of money. But they had not been worth more; they had "gone down." And then someone had suggested to Mr. Fanshawe that he ought to—to buy something else. So he wanted to see the papers—the bonds. And the bonds were not there—in the safe of the firm any more. He was not a kind-hearted man, this Mr. Fanshawe—he would not understand. And his lawyers—the men who did his business for him—his buying and selling—they would not understand, either. And the police would come. He had thought they were at the door just now. He would be arrested. Perhaps they would not send him to prison. But everybody would know about it. And just now—this would be terrible. The wedding only a few weeks off. There was only one thing to do. He must go away—at once—before the police came. Anne could say that he had been taken ill and could not come to the wedding. But he would have to go—to go to Canada. Only there would he be safe.

And through all this tangled story, of which Amyas understood so little, there ran, like a single red thread, the name of one man. It was he who had suggested "borrowing" the papers, buying on a margin the stock that did not make money as they had expected. It must have been he also who had so managed things, behind Robin's back, that Mr. Fanshawe wanted now to sell those papers—those bonds—the ones that had been borrowed—the ones that Robin could not sell or give back—because they were not in his possession any longer.

One name; Morrell—Morrell—Morrell!

In sudden fear, Robin leaped up from his chair. "We must hurry," he panted. "I don't know what's going to happen. Only an hour ago Morrell called me into his office. He told me that I must produce the bonds at once. He pretended that he had never suggested my using them. He laughed at me. I was ruined, he said. I had better get out of town as soon as possible. Even if I wasn't arrested, the Fanshawes would never speak to me again. Hurry, Amyas. Pack up anything—you don't understand—I mustn't spoil my sister's wedding. It would be better—better if I—did the thing that the Seigneur wanted to do, that night when we watched him. And oh, Amyas," he broke out, wringing his hands, "I've not only ruined myself, I've ruined you, too. I gave those old papers of yours to Morrell. He had promised to make inquiries—to look up your claim to—to the Seigneurie. I ought to shoot myself! You ought to shoot me!"

"But that," interposed Amyas, softly, "would also spoil the wedding of Mademoiselle Anne. Do not bother about those papers. Mademoiselle Anne spoke something to me about them a few days ago. It was a fairy story. Who am I to want to take from another man something that belongs to him? I will get Léontine here. She will pack your things. And you can slip away from the city, if you think you must go. Would it not be better to stay here and let this Monsieur Morel do his worst? I do not think that he could greatly harm either you or me."

"No, no, Amyas." Robin was in a fever of excitement. "You don't understand. If I disappear, people won't talk much. There'll be nothing much in the papers. Mother can say that I'm ill—and in some hospital. Only hurry! And lock the front door."

On this particular day, afternoon tea at the Randolphs' house was a very confused affair. The kitchen-maid had to carry it up to the drawing room. And the fat cook was either furious or in tears; for Léontine was not to be found anywhere. No one thought of telephoning to Robin's apartment to ask for her there. Yet there she was.

Five minutes after her coming, the study and the living room looked neat and orderly again. In ten minutes more Robin's suit-case was packed and strapped.

"Amyas will go to the station with you, Monsieur Robin. And now write a short letter to your sister. Tell her anything you like to keep her from worrying, and I'll give it to her myself."

But Robin stood gazing at Léontine, with a new light in his eyes. This was the old Léontine that he had known in the old days at Cap à l'Ours—something dependable—something to lean on.

"I—I don't want to go away all alone," he stammered. "I think I'd shoot myself—or drink myself to death in a week. Oh, Léontine, I'm no good, really. I've got no——" He almost smiled at his memories of the old phrase; he had used it so often, up there at Cap à l'Ours. "I've got no guts."

"Then Amyas must have enough for two," said Léontine, holding out Robin's overcoat. "He accompanies you, of course. We should not think of letting you go alone."

But Robin still hesitated. He was thinking of the haughty, rather cold, Cornelia Fanshawe. How she would draw back her skirts from him when she knew what he had done! And she would know. Morrell would tell her.

"Léontine," he said, slowly, as though he were weighing every word of a decision that would influence his whole life; "Léontine, do you remember that day in the church at Bonne Rivière, when you made the sign of the cross on my forehead with holy water? You do? Well, will you go with me now, instead of Amyas? We can go into a church again, you know—and—get married. I'll never be able to come back here—and I'll do my best to take care of you."

Léontine's face was alight with a look that Amyas had never seen there. He turned away his head. It dazzled his eyes.

"But of course I will go," Léontine answered, in a perfectly matter-of-fact tone. "Only—you know, Monsieur Robin, there is no need of your taking me into a church."

"Léontine!" exclaimed Amyas, horrified, up in arms at once.

But the girl put her brother gently aside.

"This is not for you, Amyas," she said. "Come, Monsieur Robin. I am quite ready. I brought my hat and coat and a few things with me. They are out there in the hall. You see, I hoped—" she hesitated, then smiled up into Robin's face—"I hoped that you would ask me to go with you."

As Léontine had said, Amyas was "out of all this." He had to stand, biting his fingers, while Robin wrote a letter to Anne, gave it to Amyas, and then let Léontine help him on with his coat.

"I have no money," cried Robin, as he went toward the door.

"But I have," Léontine protested. "I do not keep mine in a bank where it is hard to get out. Come, Monsieur Robin, we have no more time to waste. Good-by, Amyas. Kiss me."

But Amyas turned away. He saw, so he thought, his sister starting on the road to eternal damnation; he could not bid her Godspeed. But as she disappeared in the hall with Robin, Amyas dashed after her, and took her in his arms.

"I do not care," he muttered in her ear. "I do not care. Only take good care of him."

"You are a silly boy," Léontine answered, pinching his cheeks. "Even now you do not understand."

Robin held the door open for Léontine to pass out. But she drew back. She made him walk out before her, then closed the door, and hurried after him down the stairs.

"And now for my part," said Amyas to himself. "I think that I will call on three people: first, on Mademoiselle Fanshawe; then on Monsieur le Vicomte de Morelle, and last of all, on My Mademoiselle."

CHAPTER FOUR

Three Interviews

"I do not know your name," Cornelia Fanshawe said to Amyas, as he stood beside her, ready to take his leave, "but you are a faithful servant. And what is far better, a devoted friend. There must be good in Robin Randolph if he can inspire devotion such as yours."

Amyas wanted to reply that his devotion was not half so great as that of his sister Léontine; but he had decided that in the presence of this young lady, who was evidently a very *grande demoiselle* indeed, it was wiser to suppress Léontine altogether. So he bowed.

"Mademoiselle understands, then," he said. "She will speak to Monsieur, her father, about those papers—those bonds—tonight, please. And she will write just a line to Monsieur Randolph at this address." He handed her a rather soiled bit of paper. "You see, I wish to have Monsieur Robin back in good time for the wedding." Then with an engaging smile that showed all his even teeth and lit up his blue-gray eyes, he added, "I hope that Mademoiselle will show herself gracious to him on that—what is it that your papers call it?—that auspicious occasion. As for Monsieur Morel, I shall speak to him myself. *Salut,* Mademoiselle! *Bonne chance!*"

And he was gone.

"Smithers," said Miss Fanshawe to the footman who had shown her strange visitor out, "tell my father that I shall be happy if he will come to my sitting room as soon as he returns from the office. And if—if Mr. Morrell should call, I am not at home."

Amyas' second interview was somewhat less peaceful.

"All right," said Henry Morrell, forgetting the Vicomtes de Morelle from whom he may or may not have been descended, "but you can go to hell, you and that young idiot of yours."

"It is you that will doubtless go there, Henri," Amyas answered, pleasantly. "And you may meet your brother there—once I worked in his pulp mill at Rivière de Loup. As for your father, by whose side you used to ride on the butcher wagon, him you probably will not see, for although he smelt most vilely of the slaughter house when he came to mass on Sundays, he was nevertheless a good man. All Canadians," he added, squaring his shoulders proudly, "are good, until they grow ashamed of their language and their religion, and try to be English—English!"—he underlined the word with utter scorn—"or French! Anything except the one good thing that they really are. Henri, I wager that you have not been to mass since you left Bonne Rivière."

"You go to hell," repeated Henry Morrell, glaring at this unexpected compatriot, who held him in the hollow of his hand. For he knew what would happen if Amyas chose to describe to some grinning newspaper reporter how Henri Morel had looked in his early manhood, perched on the box of his father's very odorous butcher cart and driving the lame old roan mare to the back doors of the *étrangers* at Cap à l'Ours.

"One moment," said Amyas. "You have two papers that belong to me."

"I have destroyed them. They were of no importance."

"Liar! I am waiting. See, there across the street is the office of the *Evening Courrier*. I know a boy who runs one of the presses. He could, if I asked, take me to that big, yellow-faced man who sits in a wire cage and writes the news. Shall I go?"

"If I give you the papers, you promise to—to keep your mouth shut?"

"I make no promises. I only want what belongs to me—but I try to be a good Catholic. I do not harm any man—unless he harms the people that are my friends. Ah, thank you."

Amyas took the papers that Morrell held out to him.

Carefully, he tore them into small pieces, and threw them out of the open window.

Morrell watched him, his mouth open, his eyes like round pebbles.

"Why, you God-damn little fool," he laughed. "Do you know what you're doing? What you're throwing away?"

"They have made trouble enough, already," said Amyas. "My grandmother, God rest her soul, did not wish them to be found. Otherwise, she would not have concealed them. Shall I, because I covet another man's goods, perhaps bring to light the thing that she died to hide? I do not understand much about the whole matter. But I understand enough to want my grandmother to rest happily in her grave and not to be bothered in Purgatory—if she is still there—with the foolish doings of her only grandson, Amyas Dufour—at your service, Monsieur. Bonsoir, Henri. Come and see us some time at Bonne Rivière. Salut!"

And he was gone. As the door slammed behind Amyas, Henry Morrell hurried to the open window. A few tiny bits of paper were still fluttering in the spring breeze. He sighed. No one could ever piece them together again. Still, he was rid of his strange visitor.

"A narrow shave," he said to himself. "I think I'll write to Randolph and tell him how sorry I am for the whole mix-up. In a year or two he can take his money out of the firm and be damned to him. By that time, I'll be on my feet—and no cheeky little Canuck will be able to hold me up, either."

Amyas had still one other visit to make on that memorable afternoon.

After tea, he came in and stood before his Mademoiselle. He had waited till the usual crowd of visitors had gone.

"Mademoiselle Anne," he said, "I beg you not to be anxious. But the matter on my mind is this. I will speak plainly. Monsieur, your brother, has been—drinking a little too much of late. He was sick this afternoon. I brought him a doctor——" After all, Léontine had been a sort of doctor to Robin; it was not much of a lie. "And this doctor said that he must go away for at least a week—and at once. So he has gone off to a—sani—a sani—ta—rium.—You are not to write to him, please—so the doctor says. But he will be back in time for the wedding. I will go and fetch him back myself."

Somehow or other, Anne was not greatly surprised. She knew that young men sometimes got to drinking so heavily that they were forced to disappear for a time.

"There will also," Amyas went on, "be more room now in our apartment for Monsieur Aspinwall——"

"But did Robin go off without a single word to us?" Anne asked.

Robin's letter was in Amyas' pocket, but he had never intended to deliver it.

"His hand was too shaky, Mademoiselle. He said that you would understand—and he knew that you would trust us."

"Us?" interposed Anne.

"I mean, me, Mademoiselle. I mean——"

Just then Mrs. Randolph swept in. She was upset, very much annoyed, indeed. The tea table that afternoon had been "a mess"—no sandwiches, and dirty cups.

"Léontine has disappeared," she quavered. "I always told you, Anne, that you made a mistake in having a French Canadian in the house. You remember what old Mrs. Aspinwall used to say—that you'd live to regret making friends with these people. And now Léontine has walked off. Took her hat and coat and a small bag. She even borrowed ten dollars from the cook, and five from the furnace man. They'll never see their money again."

Amyas, looking up, caught Anne's eyes fastened on him. He could see suspicion clouding her face. He knew what she was thinking. She was remembering Léontine and Monsieur Robin at Cap à l'Ours. Somehow, he must make her understand. He couldn't bear to have all his careful plans go to smash at the last moment; to be beaten on the last green. His Mademoiselle had always won out on the last green, somehow. He went up to her, and stood before her with clasped hands.

"Mademoiselle," he said, with such earnestness that Mrs. Randolph stopped moaning and complaining for a moment, "Leontine and I have always served you, not for the money, although we often needed it, but because we—loved you. Because we

—are your friends. When I was your caddie, I never took balls out of your bag, like the other boys. And I always knew which club to give you, even before you reached for it. Now Léontine is, for the moment, the caddie of Monsieur Robin. She will not steal his clubs either. And she will see that he—that he does not lose his match—on the last green. Only"—he lifted his eyes to Anne's with the same look that he had often bestowed on the statue of Saint Anthony at the Orphelinat—"only, you must trust us. Will you do that?—Please?"

Mrs. Randolph interrupted, waving her hands about helplessly.

"What does he say? Why doesn't he talk English?"

Anne silenced her with an authoritative motion of her hand. Mrs. Randolph recognized the motion. When Anne acted like that, there was nothing to do except let her have her own way. And anyhow, it was she who was getting married; she must not be crossed more than was absolutely necessary.

"Léontine has gone," Amyas went on, dropping into English. "Gone with Monsieur Robin. To—take care of him."

Mrs. Randolph shrieked softly, and dropped into a chair.

"So that's it," she moaned. "My son has run off with the kitchen maid! I always suspected that there was more between them than met the eye.

Oh, Anne! And with your wedding coming on in a few days, and all the invitations out. What shall——"

"Be quiet, Mother. After all, it is *my* wedding, not yours, thank God. Now, Amyas, what were you saying?"

"Léontine will take care of him. She will send him back for the wedding. She——"

"She will marry him," sobbed Mrs. Randolph.

Amyas gave Mrs. Randolph only one look. But it was enough to dry up her words at their source.

"My sister, Madame, will do nothing to harm Monsieur Robin. She loves him too much. Surely, Mademoiselle Anne, you understand that. And now I must go. I may not see you, Mademoiselle, for a few days. Not until I can bring Monsieur Robin back to you, in time for the wedding. I should have gone with him—but there were matters that I had to attend to here before it was proper for me to depart. You trust us, Mademoiselle, do you not? Sometimes, you know, in a golf match, you must depend on your caddie—you must trust him—to do his job the best way he can."

Memories of past summer days at Cap à l'Ours were sweeping over Anne's mind; memories of the strange, tattered little boy who had carried her clubs; who had risked empty pockets in order to wager all his savings on her prowess; who had never talked much, but who, when she needed him, had been always at her elbow, ready—to "do his job the best way he could." She held out her hand to Amyas.

"I trust you, Amyas," she said.

And Amyas bent his head and kissed her hand, the hand of *his* Mademoiselle.

"Au revoir, Mademoiselle. Au revoir, Madame. Do not be anxious. I shall see you again soon, when I bring Monsieur back with me—to the wedding."

"Salut, Amyas," said Anne, more deeply touched than she cared to show. "Bonne chance!"

And Amyas went out, not knowing that he had seen his Mademoiselle for the last time; that more than twenty years were to pass before he set eyes again on a much-married woman, who was "Mademoiselle" no longer to anyone.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Two Seigneurs

"This was a wonderful idea of yours," Robin Randolph said to Amyas, as they stood together on the deck of the little side-wheeler that was just rounding the point behind which nestled Cap à l'Ours. "Nothing could have set me up again like a day or two up here. I feel like an entirely different man."

"You look different," Amyas answered.

And it was true. The old, drawn, haunted look had disappeared from Robin's face. He had touched no alcohol, except an occasional glass of beer, for two or three days. Unconsciously, his hand stole to the pocket of his coat, where a night-letter lay, a wire that had reached him in Montreal the night before—from Cornelia Fanshawe.

"I feel like a man again, Amyas," Robin went on. "As if I could go back and face that rascal Morrell on his own ground."

"I think, Monsieur, that you will not have to bother very much about him."

"But at least I must get back your papers. I'll do what I can to help you in that matter. I ought never——"

Amyas waved his hand in a wide, careless gesture.

"That matter can rest, Monsieur Robin. It has rested ever since my grandmother died. Ah, there comes Léontine."

Robin's face clouded for a moment, as he watched the girl coming toward them along the narrow deck.

"I can't make her out, Amyas," Robin whispered. "She wouldn't do what I wanted to do—get married, I mean. But she was ready to do—to do the thing that I—I didn't—couldn't want,—without getting married first. When we reached Montreal, I thought we'd register at a hotel as man and wife, and that would be a kind of marriage. I'd have acknowledged her as my wife, wouldn't I? And we couldn't have stayed in a hotel as sister and brother. But—well, you know what she did?"

"What else could she do?" Amyas whispered back, as Léontine came nearer. "She understood without my telling her. Corinne's cousins, the MacNicolls, in Montreal, they were much honored that you should spend a night under their roof. And Sophie MacNicoll, who is engaged to Ulysse Lajoie—he is now a person of honesty and drives one of these new horseless cabs—she did not mind having Léontine sleep with her for one night."

"But, Amyas," persisted Robin, "I feel like such a fool. I don't understand half what you and Léontine have done for me. And I shall never be able——"

The bellowing whistle of the old side-wheeler burst into raucous sound.

"Le bateau crie," cried Léontine, hurrying up. "We shall be at the dock in a few minutes. Come along."

It was early June. The *étrangers* had not begun to arrive yet, but Cap à l'Ours was already getting ready for them. There were a number of people on the dock. Several of them hurried up to Robin, to shake hands with him.

"Salut, Monsieur Robin. Bien aise de vous revoir."

"Bonjour, Pascal. Vous avez eu un bon hiver? Pas trop de misère?"

"Non, Monsieur. Pas trop."

The same old familiar greetings. Robin warmed to them all, these strange friends of his, who greeted him as if he had been away for only a few days.

"Aha, Monsieur Robin," croaked old Madame Pilote, at the Pilote House, "back again, I see. You will honor us by staying for a few days?"

"Monsieur Robin," explained Amyas, "has come up for only a short time to arrange some small matters. You know, Madame Pilote, that he and his family will occupy their old cottage no more."

"But yes, we have heard," the old postmistress chuckled. "We get news at Cap à l'Ours these days. And they are beginning to build the new railroad that will bring us a post every single day from Quebec. We have heard of Mademoiselle Anne's approaching *noces*. No doubt your Monsieur Robin comes to seek a new cottage for her this summer. Now I could suggest the house of my nephew, Pierre Tremblay. It is of a comfortableness——"

But Amyas excused himself and slipped away. He still had a distaste for telling any more lies than necessary.

He and Robin met Monsieur le Curé Bienvenu, sailing down the boardwalk of the village, with the skirts of his cassock flying behind him in the spring breeze. The Curé looked a little strangely at Amyas; but he said nothing. He was not only a holy man; he was a wise one, also.

That evening Robin insisted that Amyas, Léontine, and he himself should walk to Bonne Rivière. He wanted to see Corinne. He felt that he had treated her very shabbily, for during the past two months he had forgotten all about her; had sent no money for her hospital charges, so that she had been obliged to come home to Eli and the children by the first boat of early spring.

"It is Monsieur Robin, Corinne," said Léontine as Robin came into the kitchen of Eli Martel's house—the kitchen where he had once stood with Léontine, waiting for Monsieur le Curé to bring *le Bon Dieu* to the unconscious woman in the next room, the woman with the new-born baby at her breast.

Corinne came forward, feeling her way a little, but then stretching out both her hands.

"Monsieur Robin—my Monsieur Robin!" she said, holding back her tears with an apparent effort. "I am glad that the Good God gives me yet a chance to thank you—you and Mademoiselle Anne."

"She is blind," whispered Amyas in Robin's ear. Corinne heard.

"But of course I am blind," she said, as simply as if she were stating the fact that she had a slight cold. "Yet if it had not been for Monsieur Robin and for the kind doctors at Quebec, always I should have thought that some day I might see again. Always I should have wearied out the Mother of God and the Saints with my petitions for a cure—for a miracle. I should have wanted to go to Sainte Anne de Beauprês on a pilgrimage—in hope—always in hope—of getting better. But thanks to Monsieur Robin—"she patted his hand between her own wide, strong palms—"and the good doctors, I know that I cannot get better ever. For the nerve—the thing that I used to see with—is dead, so the doctors said. Of course," she added, feeling her way to her chair, "le Bon Dieu could, if He wished, make even my dead nerves to see. But it would be too great a miracle for such as I to ask. Before I went to Quebec, I did not understand how great a thing I was asking of Him. I thought that it would not be presuming to ask a small cure, a small miracle. Now I understand. And the Good God, His Mother, and all the

Saints will now have more time to listen to the prayers of other people—people who need their help more than I do. So, Monsieur Robin, I thank you again, for now I am content. I do not even wish to see you, Monsieur Robin—as you are now—a big, handsome man of importance. I much prefer to see you in my mind, as I used to do, when I first came to cook for Madame, your mother—in the old days."

"Que les beaux jours sont courts," Robin murmured, and his own eyes were filmy with tears. But Corinne laughed.

"All days are short," she said, "for a woman who is as busy and as happy as I am. Léontine, bring the children in, so that they may make their reverences to Monsieur Robin."

Robin slipped away as soon as he dared. He was becoming conscious of the old sense of discomfort, of embarrassment, that he had so often experienced among these people; a disquieting sense of his own inferiority, as if these same people were in possession of some source of secret strength and poise from which he himself was excluded forever.

"I hope that Eli is kind to her," he said to Léontine, as they walked along the road to Bonne Rivière, with Amyas just behind them.

"About as kind as usual," Amyas interposed. He never had liked Eli; he would never like him, even in Purgatory, supposing both of them ever got there. "Madame Pilote tells me that Eli is becoming very rich. He isn't the Seigneur's agent for nothing. It is Eli who has started the idea of the new railroad that is to give work to so many people and make Cap à l'Ours a great and important place. He is persuading everyone to buy stock—whatever that may mean—in the railroad."

"I hope it never comes," Robin exclaimed. "If it does, it will ruin Cap à l'Ours forever."

They had passed through the village of Bonne Rivière, and had reached the river bridge.

"Shall we turn back here?" asked Amyas.

Robin hesitated. He could not have guessed how much hung on his decision that soft, spring evening.

"No, not yet," he said at last. "Let's walk as far as the Seigneurie." He glanced sideways at Amyas. "I want to have just a look at it."

"I don't think I'd go there, Monsieur Robin," Amyas advised. "Old Madame Pilote is a terrible gossip. I don't believe everything she says—but she told me that the Seigneur is getting queerer every day. Usually when spring comes and the *étrangers* are not far off, he comes out of his burrow, like a sleepy old bear who has snored all winter, and begins to take an interest in life again. But this spring——"

"Well, what of it?" Robin's curiosity was at work again. He had had one exciting peep at the Seigneur, last December. Why not have another, now? Besides, there was to him something fascinating and dramatic in standing shoulder to shoulder with Amyas and looking at the present owner of Mont Sainte Marie Manor at the same time. Best of all, he would like to bring the two together. To see if there were really any chance resemblance between them.—It would be terribly exciting. "The Two Seigneurs." Like one of these new moving pictures. After all, there was no reason in the world why he should not call on the Laird. He had met him a thousand times. Indeed, it would really be a courteous thing to do. Especially, if the man were hungry for a glimpse of people of his own kind.

So he pushed aside Amyas' restraining hand.

"I'm going to pay my respects to the Seigneur," he said, obstinately.

"Then Léontine and I had better turn back. It would not be fitting for us to—it would not be——"

"What nonsense! You are both my friends, aren't you?"

This was an appeal that Amyas could not resist. Perhaps it would have been wiser had he told Robin all that he had gathered from old Madame Pilote. For she had said that the Seigneur was more upset than usual, because letters had come from his lawyers in Quebec—Madame Pilote had seen and handled the letters herself—in which there was mention of some new claimant to the Seigneurie property. The Quebec lawyers had heard that inquiries were being made in Montreal about the Seigneur's uncle—God rest his soul—if it were proper to pray God for the soul of a heretic Protestant.

But Amyas had only partially understood her. He vaguely connected the Seigneur's new troubles, not with himself, but with something that Monsieur Robin had been doing with those old papers of his. Thank Heaven, they were gone now.

He was not anxious about himself at all. He was anxious about his Monsieur Robin. If the Seigneur had found out that it was Robin who had stirred up the Quebec and Montreal lawyers, and if the Seigneur were "queerer than ever," then it would not be wise for Robin to call upon him just now. Still—when Robin said, "You are both my friends, aren't you?" Amyas saw no possible answer to the question except to say, "Yes, of course," and to do what "his friend" wanted him to do. That was the simple foundation of his creed of friendship.

So the three walked on slowly through the spring night. It had turned cold, as it always does when the wind from the St. Lawrence blows landwards to Bonne Rivière. Amyas turned up his collar and thrust his hands deep into the pockets of his jacket. He did not look like a very respectable or prepossessing figure.

"Let's go in by the back road," said Robin, as they came to the big, wooden gates. "The way we went before, Amyas."

The gates were closed. But Robin lifted the bar and pushed them open.

Just as the gate closed behind them, Robin stopped short and held up his hand.

"What was that?" he whispered, lowering his voice, instinctively. "I thought I heard a shot."

"Oh, no, Monsieur Robin; impossible," said Amyas. But he had heard it. "Let us go back. It is too late to make calls now. Let us go back."

But Léontine knew nothing of what the sound of that shot had meant to Amyas and to Robin. She only knew that when guns went off inside houses, someone was generally hurt. And if the hurt person were alone, then that person needed help.

"I am going to look," she said, abruptly. Amyas tried to hold her back; but she broke away from him. Shaking his head, he followed her. Robin, unwilling to be left alone, ran after them.

The big, silent house of rough white stone looked ghastly and forbidding in the early moonlight. As the three approached, they met no one; they heard no voices. There did not seem to be a light in any of the windows.

Robin, who had crept around the corner of the deep veranda, caught just a tiny gleam from somewhere. He saw it now. It was coming from one of the lower windows, the window of the study. The curtains were drawn; but the lower part of the window was slightly open, and the curtain moved, now and then, in the cold breeze, letting out a little light and then shutting it off again. He reached out and caught Amyas by the arm.

Once again they stood exactly where they had stood that night last winter—except that now Léontine was with them. They stared at the drawn curtains. Even when the wind moved them, one could see nothing of the room beyond.

"I might reach in and pull the curtains apart," whispered Robin.

But his arm was not long enough. By an inch he failed, at the uttermost stretch, to reach the edge of the closed curtains.

"You try, Amyas." But Amyas shook his head.

"No," he whispered. "It would not be fitting. You, Monsieur Robin, might draw aside the Seigneur's curtains, but not I."

Robin snickered under his breath.

"You've got far more right than I have, Amyas, if you only knew it."

Léontine shivered and drew back from the window.

"We've no business here," she said, still whispering. "We ought not to have come at all—only I thought someone might be hurt. I was foolish. Probably it was a boy shooting at a mark down there on the beach. Come along."

She seemed to take command, now, of the little group. And Robin felt a sense of relief when they were all three on the road once more, hurrying down to the river bridge, and through Bonne Rivière. At the door of Corinne's cottage, Léontine stopped.

"I am staying here with Corinne, Monsieur Robin," she said. "Do you go back to Madame Pilote's and get a little sleep."

CHAPTER SIX

The Creed of Friendship

NEXT morning, at five o'clock, Robin was shaken out of a sound sleep by Amyas, who stood over him, holding his suit-case in his hand.

"Hurry, Monsieur Robin," he said, anxiously. "Don't wait to wash or shave. I have not been able to sleep all night. And I have been with Léontine since four.—I waked up the telegraph operator—he is a nephew of Eli's—and I made him wire to Mademoiselle, your sister, that you would return at once. The post-wagon for Quebec leaves in an hour. You can get a fresh carriage, if you like, at Baie St. Paul. You must not wait for the boat. Here is money. You can give it back to me later on. If you make haste, you will be at home again in three days."

"But why—I thought we were going to——" Robin was disgruntled; only half awake.

"We have changed our minds. Léontine wants to go for three days to Tadousac to see—a friend there who is very ill. The news came last night when she got home. It is better that she goes away from here now. She came with you. People will talk."

Robin was confused. But after all, Amyas and

Léontine had been, in a sense, his hosts. This was their village, not his. If they were tired of him and wanted him gone—well, the sooner he went, the better. He hated, though, to dash off in this undignified manner.

Cross and upset, he got into his clothes, and ate a hasty breakfast, while Amyas hovered anxiously around.

What was the sense of all this hurry? Madame Pilote had not yet appeared. But in front of the post-office, in the quiet of the early morning, stood the little two-wheeled, red post-wagon. The mail sack was under the seat. Amyas swung Robin's suit-case into the space above it. He almost pushed Robin up beside the gray-bearded, silent driver.

"Gonzague," he said to the driver, "take good care of Monsieur Randolph. He is my friend. Get him to Quebec as soon as possible."

"But aren't you coming with me, Amyas?" exclaimed Robin, uncertain, upset, still puzzled. "I never thought you'd let me go back all alone. And where's—where's Léontine?"

"You may meet her on the Quebec hill road. She told me to give you this."

Amyas reached up to where Robin sat huddled in the post-wagon, and thrust something into his hand.

"She says not to open it until later. She found it in your desk at home—at your apartment—stuck away in a drawer. She thought you had probably forgotten all about it."

"But what——" persisted Robin.

Amyas cut him short.

"You'll find out when you open it." Then turning to the old post-driver, who sat immovable, uninterested, pulling at his foul pipe. "Gonzague, you amuse Monsieur Randolph on the way. Tell him some of your tales about the woods—about caribou. Now, off you go, Monsieur Robin. Léontine and I, we shall be coming after you very soon—only you must make haste—Mademoiselle Anne will be expecting you. Tell her—tell her—but never mind that. Perhaps without telling, she will understand. Au revoir, Monsieur Robin. Au revoir—et bonne chance!"

The post-horse started with a jump that threw Robin back in his seat. It trotted along through Cap à l'Ours and turned up the Quebec hill. Robin looked about for Léontine; he could not see her anywhere. But half way up the Quebec hill, there was a summer cottage, close to the road; a cottage still closed and boarded up. From its veranda, you could see the whole sweep of the steep road. As the post-wagon climbed the hill, slowly, up and up, a woman came out from behind a veranda post, where she had been hiding, and stood staring after the disappearing wagon. When it had turned the last corner and was out of sight, the woman sat down on the veranda steps, and resting her chin in her cupped hands, looked out over the St. Lawrence.

She would never see him again. Amyas would never see his Mademoiselle Anne again, either. Of that she felt certain. But she and Amyas had done the best they could—for the people who had once called them friends. She hummed under her breath the old song, sung at so many, many partings on the steamboat dock, in the old days—*"Que les beaux jours sont courts."*

Au revoir, mes amis, au revoir!
Au revoir, mes amis, au revoir,
  Au revoir, mes amis,
  Bonne chance, mes amis,
Au revoir, mes amis, au revoir.

Meanwhile, at the top of the Quebec hill, from which one catches a last look down on the straggling roofs of Cap à l'Ours, a young man, sitting beside the post-driver in an old red carriage, was staring at an opened parcel in his lap—a little doll, rather battered of feature, dressed in worn blue, with red trimmings at collar and cuffs. The trimmings alone looked bright and new.

"Now I wonder," said Robin to himself, "what under the sun she meant by that!"

That same morning, a few hours later, Amyas was sitting on the little porch of Corinne's house, when Monsieur Pednaud, the Sheriff, and a strange man in a bright red coat, one of the new Canadian Mounted Police, came up the path.

"This," said Pednaud to the man in the red coat, "is the young man. I always said that he would come to no good end."

"Amyas Dufour," said the man in the English red coat—a big, powerful-looking fellow, three times Amyas' size—"I arrest you for the murder of the Seigneur of Mont Sainte Marie. Anything that you say may be used against you, so you'd better say nothing at all."

"Why not?" said Amyas, saying as little as possible.

"Because we've got you right. You were seen last night slinking around the grounds of the Seigneurie—just about the time that the Laird must have been shot, according to the doctor."

"But why?" said Amyas again. He did not understand the man's rough English very well.

"Because you had a quarrel with him. Motive enough. We know that you've been trying to blackmail him with some kind of a fish-story about having some claim to his property. Anyhow, you're arrested. That's right, isn't it, Mister Sheriff?"

Monsieur le Shérif nodded.

"Nearly," he said. "This young man's footprints were found beneath the window of the Seigneur. Only there were other footprints also—someone else—one person at least—must have been with him."

The door of Corinne's little house opened, and Léontine came out.

"I was with him, Monsieur le Shérif," she said. "If you take him, you must take me, too."

The Sheriff scratched his head.

"But I have no cells for women in my jail. In all the years I have been sheriff, there has never been a woman who——"

"Ah, they're as bad as the men, Sheriff," interposed the man in the red coat. "I always carry an extra pair of handcuffs. Come on, you two."

So they came. But the man in the red coat wondered why they looked at one another and smiled so contentedly as they held out their hands for the steel bracelets!

EPILOGUE

I

After Twenty Years

Lady Shane Macdonald, the wife of the Governor General, was lunching at the Golf Club. It had been a very dull luncheon, and she was tired of the endless teas, dinners, and luncheons of the past two days. She longed to get back to the quiet of the yacht that was lying off Cap à l'Ours, its white, clean-cut lines standing out like a highly colored photograph against the deep blue of the St. Lawrence. But after all, she had her duty to do, her position to maintain. One is not the wife of a Governor General for nothing; especially a Governor General who insists on wasting part of his holidays by stopping at the "summer colonies" on the river and allowing himself and his Lady to be entertained—and bored to distraction.

"This is all new to you, Madame, I suppose," said a voice at Lady Shane Macdonald's right. She dragged back her wandering thoughts to the charming, elderly priest who sat next to her, the Curé of Cap à l'Ours, who had such delightful manners and spoke such remarkably perfect French.

"Not entirely, Monsieur le Curé," she answered, in French that had been perfected during her years in Paris when her husband had been an attaché of the British Embassy. "I was here once—as a girl. A long—long time ago."

"Indeed! Then you will find many changes. Nowdays there are so many Americans here that people call Cap à l'Ours the 'Newport of Canada.' "

"You do not like Americans, then, Monsieur le Curé?"

"But yes, Madame. Many of them here are among my most devoted parishioners—I like them very much."

"I am glad of that—for, you know, I am an American, myself."

Monsieur le Curé nodded, with an air of complete understanding. Had he not read in the newspapers, sent him by his American friends, of the many American women who had married English men of position and of influence? Why, one of them was actually a Member of Parliament.

He was about to mention this, when Lady Macdonald caught her hostess' eye, and rose from the luncheon table. Groups formed in the big room. Lady Macdonald soon found herself at the center of one of these, that had gathered in front of a huge glass case filled with silver cups and golf trophies.

Old General Woodcock, who had been President of the Golf Club almost since its organization, had unlocked the case, and was enjoying himself immensely, exhibiting some of the club's most cherished possessions. Lady Macdonald glanced casually at one cup after another.

"And this, Lady Macdonald," said General Woodcock, "is one of our oldest treasures—the cup for the Woman's Championship. Some of the names engraved on it have become famous in the history of golf."

Lady Macdonald was handling the cup with an air of some slight interest.

"Curious," she said, in her soft, carefully modulated voice; "here is a single name that appears time after time—at the very beginning of the list."

General Woodcock took the cup carefully from her hand, fumbled for his *pince-nez,* and held the cup close to his rheumy old eyes.

"Anne Randolph," he read. "Yes, indeed, Lady Macdonald. That name is engraved here for seven years in succession. I remember that young lady quite well. But I've heard nothing of her or her people for over twenty years. You see, up here we come in contact with a lot of people, from all parts of Canada and the States; we may even come to be close friends; but in the autumn, we separate. And unless those same people come back summer after summer, one loses track of them completely."

"Perhaps that is just as well," murmured Lady Macdonald.

But the General, once started on reminiscences of the Cap à l'Ours Golf Club, did not like to be balked of his prey. So he went on, in a polite but very firm tone.

"I do not know what became of the Randolphs," he said. "And, as you say, Lady Macdonald, perhaps it is quite as well. They were not people of any great distinction—you can find thousands of families exactly like them in the smaller American cities—except the eldest daughter, this Miss Anne. She was"—the General's voice fell to a hushed note—"she was a golfer by the grace of God. To this day I can shut my eyes and see her drive. She never waggled over the ball, or took two or three practice swings. She simply went up to the ball and hit it—hit it hard—and accurately. As for her putting! Well, Lady Macdonald, sometimes I dream of her putting even yet. Oh, she might have done anything with her golf. For years after she and her people had left Cap à l'Ours, I used to search the golfing papers, always expecting to find her name there, in some of the big tournaments. But I never found it."

"Ah, yes," said Lady Macdonald, handing back the cup that she had been holding in her hands. "Probably the explanation of her disappearance from the links is a simple one. One notices something of the kind in England quite frequently. No doubt she married—married a man who did not play golf. Excuse me, General, but I see my husband at the door. He will be expecting——"

Few people, no matter whether they were Governor Generals' wives or the wife of a Caddie Master, ever got the very last word with General Woodcock.

"But indeed she did not," he persisted, clinging to Lady Macdonald's side, as she moved down the room. "Her husband—he died soon after their marriage, I believe—was a golfer. Not in her class, of course. But still he did play. He spent many summers here. Indeed, now that I remember it, he is buried at Cap à l'Ours—behind the Protestant Church—close beside old Colonel Blake. They both loved this place. They——"

But Lady Shane Macdonald had slipped away. Her hand was pressed to her heart for a moment. But in another moment, she was her quiet, sedate self again.

The Governor General stood waiting for his wife on the veranda of the Golf Club. A tall, powerful, clean-shaven Scotchman, he was; and as she took his arm, he bent down to pat the hand that lay on his coat sleeve.

"Stuffy time you've had, I take it, my dear," he whispered. "Never mind. We'll be off tomorrow."

She looked up at him, forcing a smile. How much he looked like their eldest son, Ian—who was doing so well at Eton.

"I suppose you'll think me a beast," she said, as her husband led the way to their big, closed car, "but I simply can't stick any more of this. Make my excuses at the tea this afternoon—say I've got a headache; anything. I don't often give out like this, Shane, do I? But somehow, I want to get away from people. Let me have the car for the rest of the afternoon, and I'll take a long drive. Motoring always rests me, you know."

The throngs that gathered that afternoon at the superb new cottage of Senator Cunningham, "to meet the Governor General and Lady Macdonald," met only the Governor General. But the rooms were so crowded that few people realized that Lady Macdonald was not there.

While they buzzed around the tea tables and crowded on the big verandas, Lady Macdonald was trying to escape them. But she was only partially successful—for there are some things in life that one cannot escape.

"Stop here for a moment, Hinchcliffe," she said to her chauffeur. "Wait there at the side gate."

She slipped out of the car, opened a small iron gate in a stone wall, and hurrying over a patch of green grass, went round a small stone church to a stretch of lawn at the back, that sloped directly down to the shore of the St. Lawrence. Here, in a far corner, were two flat slabs of stone. Beside the farther slab, she stood motionless, looking down at the name cut roughly into the surface of the unpolished rock.

Strange that she should have forgotten that he was buried here. She remembered his last letter—written from Cap à l'Ours—during the last summer of his life. There had been no reproaches in it. And at the end he had said, "Anne, I find that I simply cannot live without you. There is nothing left to live for. But the doctors tell me that I shall not have to wait very much longer now."

Of course she had never really loved him. She had found that out during the first week of their honeymoon. And they had had no interests in common. He puttered about with books and other people's thoughts, while she liked men who did things, men who loved power and knew how to get it and to hold it, too. If there had been children! But he had not been able to give her the one thing that she had married him for. At first she had blamed herself; thought of herself as sterile—a useless barren branch—until Shane came—and lifted that reproach from her forever. That was one reason why she loved him. But only one. There were ten thousand others.

She had met him first in Scotland, during the second summer of her married life, while Henry had been in London, fussing at the British Museum and digging among the dead thoughts of dead men. Shane was so intensely alive. She had known him for "her man" during the first week of their acquaintance. And when she came back to London and saw Henry again, she had had sense enough to tell him the truth. She had hated to hurt him. And if there had been children, then perhaps—— But there was none; not even a chance of any, so the English doctors said.—Henry had been decent about it all; awfully decent. He had gone back to Canada, and had left her in London. He had agreed to a divorce. But she and Shane were in no great hurry. "He that believeth shall not make haste." And for the first time in her life, she believed in what people call love. In her love for Shane; in Henry's love for her. Then had come the news of Henry's breakdown. She ought to have gone straight back to him. But London "season" was in full swing; she was in touch with so many interesting people; English politics had begun to fascinate her. And always at the back of her mind, had been the hope that Henry would die. Rotten thing to hope for. And yet she had always prided herself on facing things squarely. His death would make everything else so easy.

He had died.

And now, here she was—after her years in India as Shane's wife, after those years in Paris and in Madrid—she with her three children—standing here—here at Cap à l'Ours—at Henry Aspinwall's grave.

She had been foolish to come to Cap à l'Ours at all. But it was the most important of all the summer colonies. If she had refused to land there from the yacht, Shane would have been anxious, suspicious. She had told him that she had "once spent a summer here, ages ago." But she could never tell him or make him understand what this place and its people had once meant to her.

Suddenly she felt hungry for some touch of the old exhilaration that used to throb through her during the summers that she had spent as a girl at Cap à l'Ours. But the whole place was changed now. The huge hotel up on the hill was a village in itself. It stood just where Bouchard's Hotel used to stand. Bouchard's! Anne smiled to herself. It was on Bouchard's veranda that her mother had met defeat at the hands of her father's fluffy little second wife. He was dead, long since. So was her mother, although she had not died until she had seen her daughter's first baby and read of her presentation at Court. Of her sisters, Mary was happily married, and living in some mid-western American town. Eleanor had become very religious and had entered some sort of "high church" sisterhood. Shane did not approve of Eleanor. He was a rigid Scotch Presbyterian, and like old Mr. Aspinwall, in the old days at Cap à l'Ours, despised "popery" and all "popish practices."

Yes, everything was changed. Even Cap à l'Ours, that in the old days had seemed to be always the same, summer after summer.

She bent down, and picked a few stray wild flowers from among the grass, and laid them on Henry's grave. She wished that she could tell him how happy she was; wished most of all that she could show him her children. And she wanted to let him know that she was sorry—sorry for the pain that she had caused him. Would it be wrong if she said a prayer for him now?

But she shook her shoulders, as if shaking off an unpleasant thought. Prayers were not much in her line these days. And anyway, if she could do anything now to help Henry, she did not know how to do it, or what to say.

She hurried away from the little churchyard.

"I want to go for a drive, Hinchcliffe," she said, as she got into the car again. "You don't know this country. But I've a map here. I think I can direct you."

Leaning back in her closed car, she was driven up the Quebec Road. There was the roof of the old Randolph cottage, painted a cheerful blue. But the grounds were all changed. The tennis court was overgrown.

"What are you stopping for, Hinchcliffe," she called through the speaking tube.

Hinchcliffe, an old family retainer, who had graduated from horses to motors, took occasional liberties. He opened the little window behind him.

"I thought, perhaps, my lady," he said, "that since you was a-visiting churches this afternoon, you'd like to look at this one, too. It's got a nice name—Saint John the Baptist in the Woods."

Anne looked out without any show of interest.

"Why, that's the little Anglican church that used so to infuriate old Mr. Aspinwall with its popish practices! Hinchcliffe, I'm surprised at you!"

"You've no call to be, my lady," the gray-headed chauffeur answered. "I went there to mass this morning. Found it by chance, somehow. It's just the same as my parish church at home. I didn't know they had one like it in this benighted land."

"Dear me! And what would Sparkins say to that?"

Sparkins—Mrs. Hinchcliffe, when off duty—was Lady Macdonald's trusted personal maid.

"Indeed, my lady, I told her about it. And she'll be going there to mass with me tomorrow—if the yacht don't sail too early. Me and Sparkins, my lady, was married in a church like that. And with a proper nupti-al mass, too."

A bent, gray-haired man, in a cassock and biretta, was standing on the steps of the church. Hinchcliffe lifted his hat.

"That's the chaplain, my lady," he whispered. "They say he's got a church in the States somewhere, among the poor in a big city. But he's been coming up here in the summers for the past twenty-five years."

Lady Macdonald drew back into her corner.

"Drive on, Hinchcliffe," she said. "To think of you of all people trying to show me the sights of this place!"

"Very good, my lady."

They turned off to the right, on a road that Anne had never seen before, and then drove down a steep hill that brought them into the old familiar road to Bonne Rivière past the golf links. How well Anne remembered that fifteenth hole, "The Discensus."

People used to say that the player who won that hole always won the match. Well, she had won it often enough in the old days.

The old days! The old days! The phrase kept repeating itself in her mind. And then, as if associated with it, up from among these same old memories, came the ghost of a song,

Elle allait sous les branches,
Que les beaux jours sont courts.

Les beaux jours!—the happy—happy old days! And how short they seemed, indeed, as one looked back upon them.

Now they were gliding through Bonne Rivière. Anne leaned forward eagerly. Yes, there was the Orphelinat Apostolique; now quite a big, red brick building. Was the Mother Superior still there? And Sister Onésome? And the battered old statue of Saint Anthony, with her name and Robin's name painted on the base, as "Bienfaiteurs"?

Robin! Well, he and Cornelia were contented enough. He was the only member of the family who still lived in the house in which he had been born. He had grown a beard—very distinguished he looked, too; president of a bank, and member of many important committees. Only, if he and Cornelia would not make such fools of themselves by getting excited over new kinds of religions. First it had been some kind of Buddhism. Then Christian Science. Now they were tipping tables and entertaining Sir Oliver Lodge. Robin wrote Anne all about it. But Robin had always been emotionally unstable.

"Cross the bridge here, Hinchcliffe," Anne said, through the tube. "And then go along the other shore till I tell you to stop."

Now they were passing the "Seigneurie." It didn't look much like the gloomy old place that she remembered as a girl. Only the night before the Governor General and "his lady" had dined there, as the guests of the charming American family that had bought it and improved it and made it a place of happiness and of beauty and of peace. Here was at least one change for the better; a change that one could not regret.

Anne leaned back and closed her eyes. The motion of the big car soothed her. She fell into a doze. She heard Hinchcliffe say, "Shall I turn off here, my lady?" and she nodded yes without bothering to see where they were going. Then she felt the car pull up. Hinchcliffe, anxious not to disturb her, was trying to make himself understood by a bare-legged boy who was sitting on a fence, watching a drove of sheep in a rocky pasture. She let down the window beside her.

"I was trying to ask him, my lady," protested Hinchcliffe, "what might be the name of the village we're coming to, and if the road went on beyond it. I did learn a bit of French in the war—but it don't seem to do me much good in these parts."

Anne spoke to the boy, who chewed on a straw and stared at her.

"Saint Hillarion," said the boy, finally, pointing to the tin spire of a little church, that shimmered in the afternoon sun above a little group of brown-roofed wooden houses. "Pas de chemin à l'autre côté."

"No road beyond the village, Hinchcliffe."

She held out money to the boy; but he shook his head and refused to move.

"Well, we can't turn here, my lady. I shall have to go on to the village and turn there."

The big car passed a few outlying farms, then a stone chimney, standing stark and naked by itself, the remains of a fire, and swept up a little hill, to an open space surrounded by houses of a better, more pretentious type. At the top of this steeply sloping square stood the church, set on a wide stone platform; and next to it was a freshly painted, trim little place that Anne recognized at once as the Presbytère. She took a deep breath of the cold clear air that was blowing inland from the distant St. Lawrence. All that she saw seemed familiar somehow; seemed part of a long-lost picture, impregnated by a familiar, much-loved atmosphere. Her legs were stiff. If she could get out for a moment and walk around the stone platform of the church, she might enjoy another breath of the wonderful air, and probably get as wonderful a view also.

"I'm going to get out, Hinchcliffe," she said. "Turn here and wait for me near the Presbytère."

"Near the what, my lady?"

"The priest's house, that building next the church. I'm going up to the church itself for a few moments."

"And that's the third church she's been to this afternoon," said Hinchcliffe to himself as he backed the car around, doing his best to avoid crushing the toes of the crowd of silent children that had gathered suddenly out of nowhere. "It ain't natural—for her. I wonder what the master would say. Just the same, it can't do her no harm."

So, resting his elbow on the wheel, Hinchcliffe subsided into that half comatose yet sensitive state that is achieved only by the chauffeurs of the really great.

On the platform of the little church, the wind was blowing Anne's hair about her ears. From where she stood, she could look out over the whole stretch of rolling country, from the foot-hills of the Laurentians on one side, to the distant blue ribbon of the St. Lawrence on the other. "We always said," she thought to herself, "that the air up here was like sparkling Burgundy."

An old woman, her face a mass of wrinkles, but upright and still unbroken by hardship, came out of the church door. She looked at the visitor inquiringly, and held the door open for Anne to pass in. But Anne shook her head. She knew how hideously ugly the interior of all the French Canadian churches were—garish, blatant colors, fearsome statues, make-believe lace, paper flowers; everything so tawdry and so hideous. She turned to look at the view again.

So she did not notice that the old woman had stopped to speak to a figure in a black cassock, that was coming striding up the hill. She did not see the old woman point at her, or the priest nod and hurry on toward the church. She was still staring, wide-eyed and excited, at the view, when she heard a voice—a voice somehow familiar—behind her.

"Madame would care, perhaps, to see the church?"

Anne turned and found herself facing a priest, a man of middle age, rather frail for a habitant, but unmistakably a man of peasant stock. His shoes were dusty; his soutane, loose and ill-fitting, displayed at one end several inches of frayed trousers, and at the other the thin line of a collar not all too clean. The dark face was lined and drawn, as if from some persistent imperfect functioning of the bodily machinery. But the blue-gray eyes——

There was a twinkle in them, a sort of seriousness shot through with a saving light of humor and understanding. As he spoke, this priest held his hands clasped before his breast, looking up at his unexpected visitor—looking—looking like——

She whispered a name to herself—hesitating—questioning——

"Amyas?"

II

A Great Grace from God

His recognition of her came much more slowly. This *grande dame,* with the costly fur collar of her coat thrown back from her silken-clad shoulders, with her air of assurance, of habitual right to command—— It could not be!

But from long experience Anne had learned how to set a man at his ease, even the shyest, the most tongue-tied.

"Salut, Amyas," she said, simply. "Bien aise de vous revoir." Then with her most ingratiating smile, she added, "Vous avez eu un bon hiver? Pas trop de misère?"

And automatically he answered,

"Merci. Non, pas trop de misère—Mademoiselle."

He was staring at her now, devouring her with his blue-gray eyes.

Slowly he fought his way back to complete self-control that should match hers. But he waited for her to speak again.

"I am at Cap à l'Ours for only a few days," Anne went on, trying to make her voice sound matter-of-fact, simple, friendly. "It was mere chance that brought me to Saint Hillarion, this afternoon. I did not know that you were here. Neither did I know that you were——"

"A priest? Mais oui, Mademoiselle, certainement. For over fifteen years now. And I have been Curé of Saint Hillarion since last March."

There was an awkward pause. Anne had to summon all her tact in order to keep the priest at her side. He was beginning to grow panicky, to want to run away, to cut short the interview somehow. Anne had no intention of letting him go. Here was a living part of the "old days," memories of which had been surging up from her subconsciousness all the afternoon. Here was a man who did not know what her present life was, a man who could tell her the thousand things she was aching to ask, a man, a priest, to whom she was still—"Mademoiselle."

"What a wonderful view you have here," she said. "I was so tired and cramped in my car. Will you not walk about the church with me? Just for a moment or two? Ah, this air!" She took a deep breath, that made her bosom swell for an instant beneath its silken covering. "There is no other air quite like it in the world, is there, Amyas?"

She started to walk on. Would he follow her? She wanted to hold him by his fluttering cassock. He hesitated.

"I must—" he began incoherently; "I ought to——"

"Ah, don't disappoint me," she begged. "After all, you can spare five minutes in twenty years or more —for an old—an old friend."

He fell into step at her side. They paced along the wide stone platform of the whitewashed church, bending their heads to meet the high cold wind from the distant St. Lawrence.

"Amyas," Anne began, abruptly, looking down at her own slowly moving feet; "why did you never come back to us, you and Léontine? My brother, you know, he came back safely—in plenty of time for the wedding. But there was so much excitement at the time that he never had a chance to tell me much. I was so glad to have him back, safe and sound, that I did not question him at all. But I kept expecting that I should at least hear from you. I did not think that you would simply disappear —after all the years that——"

She checked herself, for the man at her side had laughed. His laugh seemed to clear the air, to relax the tension.

"Eh bien, Mademoiselle," he said. "You do not mind if I call you Mademoiselle still? I could not come back to you. Neither could Léontine. And we did not wish to bother you in your new happiness with letters. For we—Léontine and I—we were shut up in prison. Yes, indeed, in the jail of Monsieur Pednaud—whose cocked hat I used so greatly to envy."

"In prison?"

"Do not waste any pity on us, Mademoiselle. At the time, it was not pleasant. But it all happened a long time ago—and it did not last long. You see," he went on, clasping his hands behind his back, and chuckling a little to himself, "it was merely another kind attention of my old friend, Eli Martel. He knew that I had nothing to do with the death of the Seigneur."

"But, Amyas, what are you talking about? Robin never told me a single——"

"He did not know—everything. That poor, unhappy Seigneur, Mademoiselle, he shot himself one June night. He had been threatening to do it for a long time—he was what you call melancholic. And he was also very poor. More of the rents went into Eli's pockets than into the Seigneur's purse, I think. And at the time of his death, Eli desired to make a little excitement—so that he might have a chance to look through the Seigneur's papers—he and Pednaud—before anyone else came. And the little excitement was—Léontine and I. But as soon as the great people came down from Quebec—the doctor and the judge and the *procureur*, they let us go—the facts of the suicide were too plain. The Seigneur had even written a letter to his brother—who would inherit—telling him what he was about to do. It was that same brother who sold the Seigneurie to the American family. He was not going to sit there, he said, and mope all winter until he put a bullet through his brain. He was kind to me and to Léontine. And Monsieur le Juge, he said things—unpleasant things to Eli and to Pednaud for having arrested us. It nearly cost the Sheriff his place. Yes, Léontine and I were very popular when we came out of jail. There was even something about us in the Quebec papers. You did not see them, Mademoiselle?"

Anne shook her head.

"I was on the ocean at the time, I suppose. On my honeymoon."

"Forgive me, Mademoiselle. It is foolish for me to call you so, but the name comes unbidden to my lips. I knew that Monsieur Aspinwall died. I was at Cap à l'Ours, staying for my summer holiday from the Seminaire with Monsieur Bienvenu, when—they brought Monsieur Henry back to bury him—behind your little church."

"It is not mine, Amyas."

"Forgive me once again. I am, after all, only a clumsy country priest."

He stopped speaking for a moment, and paced slowly at her side.

"Well," Anne asked, after a time, "and what then?"

"Nothing much. Monsieur Bienvenu was very patient with me at that time. I lived with him. He—he made me see that I had been, as he called it, serving false gods—gods of my own making—instead of serving the one God who made all things. But it took me a long time to understand that. You see, these gods of mine, they had been very dear to me—and they were kind. I used to think of them as my friends."

"I don't think that I quite understand, Amyas."

"It is a matter of no importance, Mademoiselle. Except that Monsieur Bienvenu was right. So I tried to forget my old gods, and after a while I succeeded. Then it was that Monsieur Bienvenu thought I might have a vocation to the priesthood. So I went to the Séminaire in Quebec to test it. I was not very happy there, Mademoiselle. But I learned a great deal. I am learning more and more, I think, every day."

"What—here?" asked Anne, pointing to the group of huddled cottages and the distant outlying farms.

"Yes—here." The priest nodded. Then once more he laughed; his infectious, boyish laugh. "As for my sister, Léontine, she has now learned so much that she knows everything. She was one of the first to realize what the great big new hotels would mean to Cap à l'Ours. What the railroad would mean, too. You came perhaps by the railroad from Quebec, Mademoiselle? Well, my old friend Eli, he and Pednaud started that railroad. All the people in the village bought stock in it. Then it became bankrupt in a year; everyone lost their money. They were very angry with Eli. But Pednaud—he is our *Député* these days—he sold the bankrupt railroad to the Provincial Government for a very large sum. The people got some of their money back. And now it runs regularly—that railroad."

"It must have utterly ruined the place," protested Anne. The priest shrugged his shoulders.

"Like everything else in life, Mademoiselle, it is a mixed blessing. For us here, it is a blessing indeed. Now, if one of my people has some dangerous sickness, he or she does not die here in agony. I can send a sick person from here to Quebec in ten hours. In the old days, it would have taken four or five days. In the winter my people would have died. So I do not begrudge Eli his money. He is not much at Cap à l'Ours now. But he takes good care of Corinne. And he is proud of the children. If he did not take care of his blind wife, my sister Léontine would know the reason why."

"But what about Léontine, Amyas?"

The priest laughed again, happily.

"Ah, it is she that has the eye for what you call the main chance. She understood that the big hotels would need milk and vegetables and meat; but good milk, properly grown vegetables, and well-killed meat. Up on the hill, near Sainte Agnès, she has a great farm—a modern one—with all kinds of machines, dairies, cow barns; everything. It is so clean that it is almost painful. And she—Léontine—manages it all."

"She is married?"

"Mais oui, Mademoiselle. She chose herself a husband just as if she were choosing a new bull. I have already baptized nine of her children. Monsieur, mon beau-frère est bien capable."

Without realizing it, Anne had dropped naturally into her old familiar way of talking with Amyas, he speaking in French, while she spoke in English—she whose perfect French had been commented upon by Madame Poincaré herself.

"Thanks, Amyas," Anne said, with a glance at her wrist watch. "It has been good of you to give me so much time. I ought to be going. By the way, I passed the Orphelinat on my way through Bonne Rivière. It looks very prosperous. Do you remember the Bazaar? And the tableaux? And——"

"And I—the Archangel Michael! The Reverend Mother died last year. But Sister Onésime is there yet. But let me accompany you to your car."

Now it was Amyas who was loath to let this visitor go. He felt that he had something to say to her; but he did not know how to say it, even if he knew what it was.

"You look chilled, Mademoiselle," he said. "Will you not stop a moment at the Presbytère? I cannot"—he chuckled again—"I cannot give you tea. But I can offer you a glass of wine."

Anne was eager to be gone. If she lingered, she feared that something might happen to change her peaceful mood. Yet she could not be ungracious.

"For a moment only, then," she said. And followed the priest who strode on ahead of her.

In his stuffy little study, with its flaming chromos of the Holy Father and the Little Flower, Anne began to feel ill at ease. The priest soon rejoined her, ushering in a very plain, youngish woman dressed in severe black, who bore on a small, tin tray two glasses of thick, yellow wine and a plate of biscuits. She did not look at Anne; evidently she did not approve of her at all.

"This, Mademoiselle," said the priest, "is Corinne's eldest child. Her husband was killed in the war. Now she is my housekeeper—and a most efficient one." The thin, austere young woman did not even smile. "Marie," the priest went on, "you must remember your mother speaking of Madame Randolph. This is her daughter." Then he added with mock seriousness, "I had, at one time, the honor of being her caddie."

Marie sniffed audibly, and disappeared.

The priest handed Anne one of the rough glasses. She raised it to her lips.

"Salut, Amyas," she said, smiling. "Bonne chance!"

The priest lifted his glass, also. Then, without drinking or even answering her smile, he put down the glass and leaned toward his visitor.

"Mademoiselle," he said, "I know that I have no right to ask. But—for the sake of the old days, tell me—are you happy?"

Anne became more uncomfortable still. She disliked taking alcohol in the middle of the afternoon; it always gave her a headache. Besides, she wanted her tea. She nodded.

"And yet," the priest went on; "happy is not exactly what I mean. It is so hard for me to say—and yet I feel as if I must ask. If you are what the world calls happy, that must mean that you have not met with any great grief—with any great loss. Is that true?" Anne nodded again, and wet her lips with the sticky wine. "Then—what will you do when the losses come, Mademoiselle? For they are bound to come to all of us. Have you found the thing that will make it possible for you to meet—to meet death—the death of someone you love—or disaster—disgrace, perhaps? You see, Mademoiselle, I do so want you to be—happy really. Until today I had forgotten how much I wanted it—and I want it still. I know that I express myself badly. Perhaps I should not have spoken at all."

Anne put down her glass and stared at the floor. She understood perfectly, but all this was nobody's business except her own. How should this priest know that at the back of her mind was always the fear of something happening—illness among her children—death, perhaps—some sudden, blinding disaster to those whom she loved! If anything should happen to Shane—to her boy at Eton! If—if—— Instinctively, she put out her hands as if to thrust the thought from her.

The priest shook his head.

"No, Mademoiselle, that is not the way," he said, softly. "You cannot push those things aside. How are you going to meet them when they force themselves on you and break down your guard?"

Anne felt suddenly bereft of her poise, of her self-confidence.

"I don't know, Amyas," she said, staring at the chromo of the Sacred Heart and wondering, half consciously, why it was so appallingly ugly. "But in the old days, up here, I used to think that you people possessed some secret source of strength, some power of meeting sorrow and pain and disaster, that was hidden from us. Robin, my brother, often said so. He was always harping on it—always insisting that we ought to try and find out what it was—and then *do* something—get hold of the secret for ourselves."

The priest leaned forward, eagerly.

"And you feel that still, Mademoiselle?" he asked. "Now?"

"More or less. If I stayed up here awhile, I might feel it as I used to do. But I must be going."

"One moment, please, Mademoiselle." The priest had gone to his bookcase, and was coming toward her with a book open in his hands. "Only yesterday," he said, hurriedly, "I was reading in this book a story about a celebrated Protestant minister. Not one whom we would even call a Christian, for he did not believe in the Divinity of Christ. To this minister came once a young man who has been all his life bitterly opposed to religion of any kind. But now he had doubts. Perhaps there was something in religion after all. So the minister told him this. 'Take a year to study the question,' he said. 'For the first six months go and live among the Bavarian peasants who have been Catholics for generations. See how they meet the really hard things of life. And then, for the second six months, live among the unbelieving, cultivated medical students of a great German university. See how they behave when confronted with death and pain and disgrace. And then come back here to me.' And so, Mademoiselle, the young man did what the old minister told him. And in a year's time, he was back again. He had found, so he said, that the unbelieving German students were helpless when confronted with life's tragedies. But that the uncultured, superstitious Bavarian peasants seemed to have some secret source of strength with which to meet these same things. Then, the old minister said to him—let me read you what he said. 'You have received a great grace from God which you must carefully follow, or it will dwindle and go out. Return to America, and courageously restart, reform your life to the degree and kind which your experience may now tell your conscience that you ought thus to change. You know well that I am no Roman Catholic; but did I find myself in my conscience forced to choose between God and the Pope, and no Pope indeed and also no God, then without a moment's hesitation I would choose, as I would in such a case wish yourself to choose—not no God and no Pope—but Pope, even Pope—and God." *

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* Note: See *Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion* (Second Series), by Baron F. von Hügel, pp. 126-129.

The priest's voice trembled a little with the intensity with which he read the last sentence. His eyes were shining. Anne had never seen Amyas of the old days look like this.

"You mean," she said, slowly, as he laid down the book; "that I ought to become a Roman Catholic?"

"I mean that you ought to become so devout a Christian that you could not help becoming a Catholic."

Anne laughed nervously. Why had she let herself in for this silly emotional discussion? It had always been like this. These people always reacted on her like some sort of drug; clouding her judgment and stirring up all her emotions.

"I'm sorry, Amyas," she said. "But really, that would be impossible." She was thinking of what Shane would say if he found a rosary on her dressing table. "Perhaps if I lived up here all the time, I might come to see things as you do. But in America —in England——"

She rose and drew her coat about her shoulders.

"I know," the priest interposed, eagerly, coming forward. "I understand—although I ought not to admit it, I suppose. Catholics here and Catholics in English-speaking countries are somehow not always the same. No, if you became a Catholic up here and then went back to America to live—I am afraid—yes, I think that you might—drift—might become an—an apostate. And that would be worse than what you are now."

"You are not very complimentary, Amyas," said Anne, a little impatiently. Why would he not let her go?

"But I am very much in earnest, Mademoiselle. Just one moment more. Would you do something for me? Remember what the old minister said to the young man: 'You have received a great grace from God which you must carefully follow, or it will dwindle and go out.' You—up here, among us—have been given grace to see the truth, even if you cannot at once follow it. But do not let it dwindle and go out. If I cannot persuade you to come all the way to us, then let me at least beg you to go part of the way with someone else. There is at Cap à l'Ours a little English church, dedicated to Saint Jean Baptiste. The minister—the priest there—is an old friend of mine. He comes to Cap à l'Ours every summer. He loves our people; he loves our faith. Always Monsieur Bienvenu and I pray that he may some day see the true way of the Catholic Faith. Every morning in summer there is at eight o'clock a service in that little church; a mass, he calls it. Go there tomorrow morning, Mademoiselle. Kneel there. And ask God to tell you what to do. Only, when He tells you—be sure you do it."

He picked up his glass, that had stood untouched beside him.

"Now, Mademoiselle, I can say, Salut—and—Bonne Chance!"

Anne lifted her own glass once more.

"It has been a delight to see you again, Amyas," she said, as she replaced her glass on the tin tray. "And to hear all your news. It brings back the old days." Then, in a lower tone, she added the refrain of the old familiar song. *"Que les beaux jours sont courts."*

But the priest held up his hand.

"Mais non, Mademoiselle," he said. "The really good days—those that are really *beaux*—they are not *courts* at all. We never forget them. They last forever."

She gave him her hand. He bent over it, then checked himself, stood upright, and stared straight into her eyes.

"You will do what I asked—tomorrow morning?" Then, with his familiar, light, little laugh, he added: "You see, Mademoiselle, I was once your caddie—and I could not bear to see you lose your match—on the last green."

"Is she indeed still Mademoiselle, Monsieur le Curé?" demanded Marie, in her stiff, black clothes, as she came to fetch the tin tray and the glasses from the priest's study. "Why does she not get a husband? Elle n'est pas pourtant trop laide."

"I only call her that, Marie," said the priest, "because I was once her caddie."

"Caddie? What is that? Not her lover, I trust."

Amyas shook his head, and he reached for his Breviary.

"I said that I was her caddie—once. Probably I shall be her lover—always."

Meanwhile, Anne was sitting back in her car, speeding along the straight, narrow road to Bonne Rivière. At the foot of a steep hill, the chauffeur had to get out to look at the motor. Anne let down the window and leaned out.

"Hinchcliffe," she said, "I think that I shall go to that little strange church of yours tomorrow morning—before the yacht sails. At eight o'clock, is it not?"

The chauffeur lifted an emotionless face that twitched only very slightly at the corners of his mouth.

"Very good, my lady.—Sparkins will wake you in time—and I shall be waiting for you on the dock with the car. You'll like it, my lady. It's a cosy little place." He wiped his hands on a bit of waste, and hid it beneath the leathern cushion of his seat. Evidently he wanted to say something. Anne knew him of old. So she waited. "I was just about to remark, my lady," he went on, as he slid into his seat, "that them Romish churches is all right enough for the French and the Irish and those other foreigners. But for us English, my lady—well, I'd rather—and so would Sparkins—take our sacraments in our own speech. And though I've no objection to kissing the Pope's foot—he's a great bishop and a good man, no doubt—still, I'd rather kiss the Archbishop of Canterbury's ring—apron and gaiters and all. It's a mere matter of taste, after all, my lady. Some goes as far as the foot—but we English, we're satisfied with the hand."

As they drove through Bonne Rivière, Anne stopped the car.

"You needn't wait for me, Hinchcliffe," she said. "I'm going in here for a moment. I can get a carriage in the village. If the master asks for me, tell him that I am inspecting a local orphanage. That will please him. He'll know that I'm on the job."

Next morning the gray-haired chaplain of Saint John the Baptist in the Woods was standing on the steps of the little church, waiting for his server to put out the candles on the altar and lock the sacristy.

"Who was that strange woman at mass this morning?" he asked of the young man as he came down the aisle to the front door.

"I don't know, Father. Never saw her in my life. She was crying. She had a heavy veil on but I saw her shoulders shake."

"In some trouble," murmured the priest. "I ought to have spoken to her. But she hurried away before I could get out of the sacristy."

"Look, Father." The server was pointing downwards to the wide expanse of the St. Lawrence. "See the big yacht there. I paddled round it yesterday. It's getting up steam now."

"It's the Governor General's yacht. We'll have peace again, now that he's leaving. You go on and tell my sister to have my breakfast ready. I'm going back into the church for a minute. I want to say a prayer for that woman. It's the least I can do."

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Oliver, J.R.

Rock and sand

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